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**AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE  
ROMAN EMPIRE**





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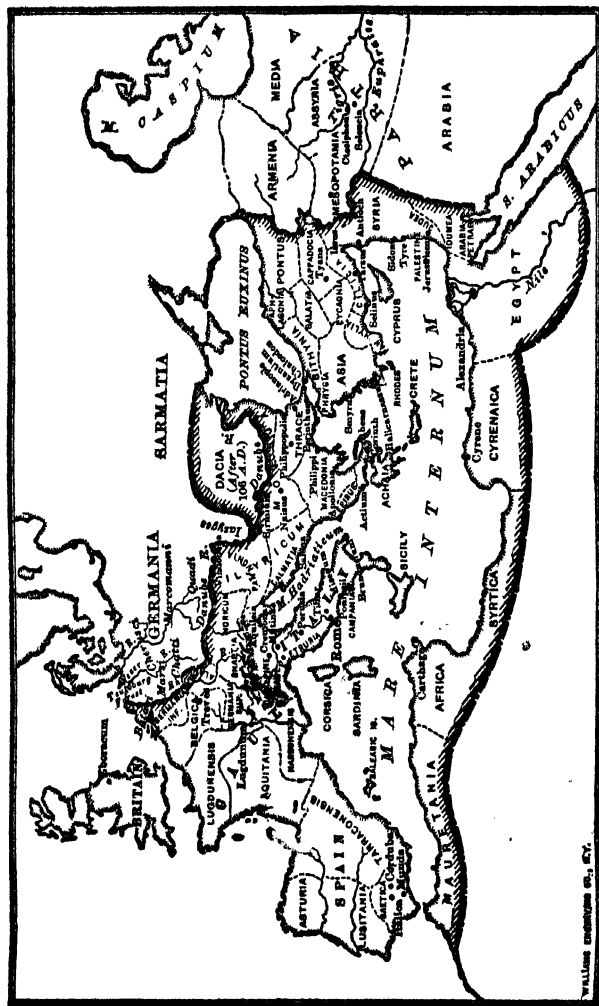
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TORONTO





THE ROMAN EMPIRE

AN OUTLINE HISTORY  
OF THE  
ROMAN EMPIRE

(44 B.C. TO 378 A.D.)

BY  
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## PREFACE

THIS little book is written to meet a need that I believe exists in many college mediæval history classes. Experience in my own teaching work convinces me that to understand the Middle Ages it is necessary to know something of the progress and fall of that great Empire whence feudal Europe issued, and no compact and practical sketch, suitable for the study of the average student, has come to hand. Hence the present outline history.

The narrative is carried to that point in the world's story — about 378 A.D. — where divers well-known manuals, e.g. Emerson's *Introduction to the Middle Ages*, Robinson's *History of Western Europe*, etc., begin. The average student in a beginner's history class in college does not always understand institutions readily, but he does apprehend personalities, hence there is no apology for dwelling somewhat more on the individual careers of the emperors than the abstract needs of the case would warrant. No attempt is made to indicate supplementary reading, — every teacher will follow his own humor therein, nor is there any call in a book like this for a list of authorities and learned citations in foot-

notes; but I must acknowledge large indebtedness to Schiller, Friedländer, Seeck, Herzog, Preuss, Burckhardt, Hirschfeld, Gardthausen, Wilhelms, Duruy, Marquardt, and Mommsen, as well as to such well-known English authors as Gibbon, Merivale, and Bury. Naturally I have found the great Smith and Pauly-Wissowa Encyclopædias of Antiquity highly useful.<sup>1</sup>

In keeping or omitting the endings of Latin proper names I have acted more on a sense of the fitness of things than on any arbitrary rule. Thus, I have written the familiar form of "Aurelian," but I have not contracted a less familiar name, such as "Maximianus."

For the preparation of the maps I must acknowledge the most kind help of Miss Alice Blackmore, formerly my student at Oberlin College, who is entitled to any credit they may deserve. I am also deeply grateful to Professors C. N. Cole and J. T. Fairchild, both of Oberlin College, for valuable assistance on divers details and upon the reading of the proofs.

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W. S. D.

<sup>1</sup> The fourth and fifth volumes of Ferrero's *Greatness and Decline of Rome* came to hand too late to be consulted regularly, but from many of the assertions and assumptions of that interestingly written work I am constrained strongly to dissent.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>INTRODUCTION: THE ANCIENT WORLD UNDER ROMAN SUPREMACY . . . . .</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>CHAPTER I. THE BUILDING OF THE EMPIRE . . . . .</b>	<b>7</b>
1. The Ides of March. 44 B.C. . . . .	7
2. Antonius, Cicero, and Young Octavian . . . . .	10
3. The Avenging of Cæsar . . . . .	14
4. The Rule of the Triumvirs . . . . .	17
5. The Fall of Antonius . . . . .	20
6. Octavian becomes Augustus . . . . .	24
7. The Augustan Régime. The Princesps . . . . .	28
8. The Senate . . . . .	32
9. The Equites and Ordinary Roman Citizens . . . . .	34
10. The Provincials . . . . .	37
11. Slaves and Freedmen . . . . .	39
12. The Army . . . . .	41
13. The Financial System . . . . .	44
14. Religious Revival . . . . .	45
15. The Worship of the Emperor . . . . .	47
16. The Pax Romana — General Prosperity of the Age . . . . .	49
17. Art and Literature . . . . .	52
18. The Winning and Losing of Germany . . . . .	53
19. The Attempt of Augustus to found a Dynasty . . . . .	59
<b>CHAPTER II. THE GREATNESS OF THE EMPIRE . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
1. Tiberius — Internal Policy . . . . .	65
2. Tiberius's Foreign Policy — Germanicus . . . . .	67
3. Sejanus and the Reign of Terror . . . . .	69



	PAGE
4. Gaius . . . . .	74
5. Claudius. His Government. The Winning of Britain . . . . .	75
6. The Rule of Claudius's Wives and Freedmen .	79
7. Nero: The Years of Good Government . .	82
8. Nero: The Tyranny . . . . .	84
9. The Anarchy, 68 to 69 A.D. . . . .	88
10. Vespasian . . . . .	90
11. The Jewish War and the Destruction of Jeru- salem . . . . .	94
12. Titus . . . . .	96
13. Domitian. The Principate changing to Out- ward Absolutism . . . . .	97
14. Nerva. The Beginning of the "Good Em- perors" . . . . .	102
15. Trajan . . . . .	103
16. The Dacian and Parthian Wars . . . .	106
17. Hadrian. His Personality . . . . .	110
18. Hadrian's Works of Peace . . . . .	111
19. The City Life under the Empire . . . .	116
20. Antoninus Pius . . . . .	121
21. Marcus Aurelius. His Personality . . .	122
22. Marcus Aurelius. His Wars and Perils . .	125
 CHAPTER III. THE WEAKENING OF THE EMPIRE .	 130
1. Commodus. His Stagnant Reign . . . .	130
2. Pertinax: Didius Julianus. The Empire put up for Sale . . . . .	131
3. Septimius Severus . . . . .	134
4. The Successors of Severus. The Depraving of the Army . . . . .	137
5. Alexander Severus. The Last Quiet Reign ere Disaster . . . . .	139
6. Why the Empire Declined . . . . .	142
7. The Great Disasters of the Empire: 235 to 268 A.D. . . . .	151

# CONTENTS

ix

	PAGE
8. Claudius II "Gothicus" . . . . .	155
9. Aurelian, "Restorer of the World" . . . . .	155
10. From Aurelian to Diocletian . . . . .	160
 CHAPTER IV. CHRISTIANITY AND THE EMPIRE . . . . .	 163
1. The Religious Revival: Mithras Worship . . . . .	163
2. Christianity and the Pagan Power . . . . .	167
3. Christianity in the Third Century . . . . .	171
4. Diocletian: The Recasting of the Empire . . . . .	175
5. The Great Persecution under Diocletian . . . . .	180
5. The Coming of Constantine: The Triumph of Christianity . . . . .	183
7. The Reign of Constantine: The Founding of Constantinople . . . . .	187
8. The Later Roman Régime . . . . .	192
9. The Last Emperors before the Invasions . . . . .	195
10. Retrospect . . . . .	197
 APPENDIX A. THE GOVERNORSHIPS OF THE PROV- INCES OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE . . . . .	 203
APPENDIX B. CHIEF OFFICIALS AND MAGISTRATES AT ROME UNDER THE EARLY EMPIRE . . . . .	207
APPENDIX C. CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EMPERORS AND OF IMPORTANT EVENTS . . . . .	210

## MAPS

1. THE ROMAN EMPIRE . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
2. THE CENTRAL REGIONS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE . . . . .	<i>facing page 1</i>



**AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE  
ROMAN EMPIRE**



# THE ROMAN EMPIRE

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Ancient World under the Roman Supremacy.**

— After the waning of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, the city-states of Greece, and the Empire of Macedonia came the Romans to subdue and absorb into their system almost all the known civilized world. It was an old world already when the warriors from the city by the Tiber started forth conquering and to conquer. Egypt and Babylonia had begun their civilizations probably as early as 5000 B.C. In Crete and Mycenæ in Greece there seem to have been highly developed forms of culture two millenniums before Julius Cæsar. Beside these hoary civilizations the later development of Greece with its marvellous art, poetry, philosophy — falling as it did between 600 and 300 B.C. — had seemed youthful indeed. But even Greece was now passing by. Athens was still a famous centre of learning. Greek was still the tongue of philosophers and literature mongers;

## THE ROMAN EMPIRE

but ere the Romans had come on the scene the powers of the free Greek cities had been broken by the rude, only semi-Grecian Macedonians. Alexander the Great of Macedon had conquered the Orient from the Ægean to India. Though he and his countrymen had subverted the freedom of the Greeks at home, abroad he had been the champion of Greek as against Oriental culture. Greek fashions, Greek literary lore, the Greek language, had been made predominant through a large part of Western Asia. In Egypt, on the confines of that caste-bound, conservative land, had been founded the great Grecianized city of Alexandria. As a civilizer, a spreader of western ideas among the Orientals, Alexander stands without a peer.

His empire, however, fell to pieces at his death (323 B.C.). Half a dozen hostile kingdoms emerged, — ruled by his generals and their descendants. Through disunion the Grecianized East was in no condition to resist the ruder but manlier folk of Central Italy when in the second and first centuries B.C. these Italians, under the leadership of Rome, fell upon them.

So Asia Minor and Syria passed under the dominion of Rome, as well as did Greece proper. In Egypt the feeble kings of the line of the Ptolemies held their thrones only at the will of the victor. In

the West there was even less chance to resist the attack. Before ever Rome turned her arms eastward, she had crushed the great Phœnician city of Carthage in Northern Africa: a most powerful rival, but too weak—even with the aid of the military genius of Hannibal, her general—to save herself. In Spain there were only disorganized Celtic tribes, and so also in Gaul,—peoples brave and warlike, but too uncivilized and disunited to make successful stand before the Roman. And about the last achievement of the Romans ere changing their government from a nominal republic to a monarchy was the conquest of Gaul (modern France plus Belgium),—a deed wrought by Julius Cæsar, which carried the conquest far northward to the British Channel, and to the Rhine, confronting half-savage Germany.

Thus the Romans came as the absorbers and fulfillers of practically all that men had wrought before them. The history of Rome begins as that of a little city of shepherds and farmers by the Tiber; it ends by becoming the history of almost all the known world. Therein lies its supreme importance. *All roads in ancient history, as all roads in ancient countries, led to Rome.* And again to understand mediæval and modern history it is needful to understand that Roman Empire from



the ruins of which so many modern nations have emerged.

During the greater period of this conquest the Romans boasted themselves free citizens of a "Republic." No "king" (*rex*) ruled over them, as over the effeminate Easterns they trampled upon. But by the year 50 B.C. this Roman Republic, long great and glorious, suffered from certain inherent defects which made a radical change necessary, if Rome were not to lose her dominion.

I. Though the Roman "franchise" — right to vote for laws and for annual magistrates — was now theoretically possessed by about all Italians, practically it was impossible for the average Italian farmer to go frequently to Rome to vote, and he could send no proxy. The voting powers thus actually fell into the hands of the "city-mob," — the idle, corruptible lower class which thronged in Rome even beyond most great cities, — open to every kind of demagogic appeal, bribe, or unscrupulous manipulation.

II. The actual administration of the now great Roman dominion was held by the *Senate*, — an august body of six hundred ex-magistrates, the members holding seats for life, and the majority of them sprung from old aristocratic families. This aristocracy had once governed ably and bravely;

now it was fearfully degenerated; yet, by adroit management of the voters of the "city-mob," the senatorial oligarchy had long been continued in power. Public office had become a synonym for private profit. The provincials had been shamelessly exploited to satisfy the lords of the Senate and the governors they appointed. The rights of the Roman lower classes were frequently thrust aside. Luxury and high living in this "noble" class went hand in hand with political chicanery and sacrifice of the general good. It is impossible to give details. Either this corrupt aristocracy must be dethroned, or the provincials would be goaded into desperate revolt, and there would not be left enough efficiency in the administration to crush them. Reform or ruin were the alternatives presented to the Roman government.

In 49 B.C. the crisis came when Julius Cæsar, conqueror of Gaul and champion of the so-called "Popular Party,"<sup>1</sup> took up arms against the ruling Senate and its general, Pompeius the Great. It is not needful to settle whether Cæsar was justified in beginning civil war precisely then. It is certain that some overturn must have come speedily, if the Roman power was to live. In 48 B.C., at Pharsalus

<sup>1</sup> Which claimed to vindicate the rights of the Italian masses as against the classes.

in Northern Greece, Cæsar defeated Pompéius, who soon after perished in Egypt. From this time to his death (44 B.C.) Cæsar was the uncrowned monarch of the world. His title was simply that of "Dictator," but there are good grounds for suspecting that he wished to proclaim himself king. The task of beating down the last resistance of his foes in Africa and Spain required his attention for the time, however. Only in 45 B.C. was he able to stay awhile in Rome and begin those reforms by which he doubtless hoped to rejuvenate the Roman world. Then in a few months the daggers of his so-called friends slew him. Men whom he had befriended, as the young Marcus Brutus; trusted lieutenants, as Decimus Brutus; men he had pardoned and promoted, as Gaius Cassius, were heads of the conspiracy. About fifty in all were partners in the murder. Their motives were various, some selfish, some genuinely patriotic. For the instant their deed seemed crowned with success.

## CHAPTER I

### THE BUILDING OF THE EMPIRE

1. **The Ides of March, 44 B.C.** — When, after burying their daggers in the body of Julius Cæsar, the conspirators — Marcus Brutus, Decimus Brutus, Cassius, and their fellows — rushed from the Senate House, they fondly imagined that they had by a single deed restored “liberty” to the Roman commonwealth. In fact, they had simply removed the one man supremely capable of reorganizing the decadent Republic, and of establishing some new government fitted to the needs of the array of kingdoms and peoples which the swords of the Scipios, Marius, and Sulla had subdued. Less than four years had passed since the battle of Pharsalus had made Cæsar’s cause triumphant; hardly one year since the fall of the last armed enemy (at Munda in Spain) against the great Dictator. In the short interval of peace Cæsar had shown an abounding activity. He had reformed many organs of the State; had started numerous buildings in Rome; had put the

calendar on a scientific basis, and formed schemes for the rebuilding of ruined Carthage and Corinth, for the settling of Roman colonies throughout the provinces, for the codification of the already complex system of Roman law. But he had been unable to win the loyal support of all his subalterns. Some were disappointed in their hopes of promotion, others were secretly attached to the cause of their general's defeated enemies; still others disliked Cæsar's unconcealed opinion that the "liberty" of the later Republic (really the rule of a few noble families) must be replaced by an efficient monarchy. The Romans had a traditional hatred of *Reges* — "Kings"; and Cæsar did not hesitate to show that he intended to accept the kingly title, and to rule accordingly. Therefore, a band of his avowed friends slew him "because he was ambitious." They believed the situation would return automatically to the forms of government prevalent before Cæsar overthrew the Republic, and that all men would hail them as noble saviours of the State. On the contrary, from the first the Roman populace showed its detestation of their deed. The senators had rushed from their meeting place, unwilling to countenance such proceedings; the humbler classes closed their doors and their shops, leaving the streets deserted. In some trepidation

the "liberators" took refuge in the Capitol (the old citadel), taking with them some gladiators to guard against the general resentment.

Meantime the servants of Cæsar had carried his body to the Forum, and the sight of the oft-pierced corpse had raised a great lamentation among the multitude, — a further sign the people were not to be trusted. Public harangues by Marcus Brutus and Cinna (another conspirator), descending from the Capitol, and escorted by gladiators, hardly calmed the mob. The "liberators" retired again behind their defences, and while they hesitated, Marcus Antonius — Cæsar's friend and most trusted lieutenant, as well as consul<sup>1</sup> for the year — could act.

Antonius himself had feared for his life when the news of Cæsar's murder spread. Finding he was safe, he began to assert himself. Lepidus (another lieutenant of Cæsar) was outside of Rome with a body of regular troops, and very early he assured Antonius that he would support him as the chief surviving officer of the State. Antonius therefore ventured to show himself the next day in the streets in his insignia of office, and began to negotiate with the band in the Capitol. At first he spoke the

<sup>1</sup> The two consuls were the chief executive officers of the old Republic. They were elected annually. Cæsar, besides being dictator, was temporarily Antonius's colleague in the consulship.

conspirators fair. The Senate was assembled on the second day after the murder. All Cæsar's acts and arrangements were ratified; amnesty was awarded his assassins. Antonius and Lepidus actually entertained the "liberators" at a banquet. It was only a brief calm before a long and violent storm.

2. **Antonius, Cicero, and Young Octavian.**—Very speedily it was plain Antonius had been given enormous power by this ratification of Cæsar's *acta*. The consul secured Cæsar's private papers from his widow, and was able to carry out about any project by simply announcing he had found it among the orders of the late Dictator. To inflame the mob against the assassins, he demanded for the slain hero a public funeral, and that his will be recited. The Senate voted this, despite the warnings of Cassius as to its effects upon the multitude. When it was known that Cæsar had left to every Roman citizen a considerable sum of money — when with all the actor's art Antonius praised Cæsar as the champion and benefactor of Rome, and finally held up a blood-smeared wax effigy of the Dictator, that all the people might see how he was done to death — popular feeling overflowed.<sup>1</sup> The body was burned

<sup>1</sup> The famous oration in Shakespeare is true in spirit, though not in letter, to the oration as reported in the historian Appianus.

in the Forum, on a pyre on which personal trinkets, the weapons of indignant veterans, the garments of the mourners, were added to the fire-wood. Popular indignation turned next against the assassins. It was fortunate that Marcus Brutus and Cassius were not in the city, or they would have been torn in pieces.

Still for a moment peace seemed preserved. Antonius showed his power by quelling the riots he had himself excited. He accepted as fellow-consul Dolabella, a friend of the "liberators." The powerful provincial governorships were parcelled out according to the plans prepared by the slain Cæsar, by which several of the actual conspirators were to have high commands. Decimus Brutus thus set off for Cisalpine Gaul; Macedonia and Syria were to go to Marcus Brutus and Cassius respectively; but Antonius was not anxious to see them depart thither, and finally carried a special law through the popular assembly (*comitia*), giving these provinces to his own brother Gaius and to Dolabella.

This was the beginning of the new conflict. Headed by the great orator Cicero, who, although without part in the original conspiracy, had rejoiced in its perpetration when crowned by seeming success, the friends of the old constitution began



attacking Antonius in the Senate, as not honestly seeking to restore the "liberty" subverted by Cæsar; and at this moment a new personage came on the scene — the grand-nephew and adopted son of the slain Dictator — Octavian.

Gaius Octavianus stands in history as one of the most remarkable examples of youthful precocity ever known. He was less than twenty years old, and was busy with his studies at Apollonia in Illyricum when news came of the tragedy at Rome. His experience in public affairs had been slight. His health was frail. He was plunging into a situation well calculated to try the most practised politician; yet after a little counselling with his intimate friend Agrippa, he went to Italy, landing near Brundisium early in April. He took the name of his adoptive father, and avowed that, as Cæsar's son, he was bound for Rome to seek his father's personal inheritance. The Cæsarian name was one to conjure with. He did not lack friends and well wishers. At Rome he found Antonius prepared to contest his claim to the Dictator's private fortune, and to checkmate the consul he began gathering an armed band out of Cæsar's veterans settled in Campania. In alarm Antonius paid over part of the money; but Octavian's position was still precarious. He pretended to have no intention of avenging the

Dictator, and let Cicero and the Constitutionalists treat him as a harmless and useful tool for shelving Antonius. None realized that in this unpretending youth there was a statesman and manipulator of men of the very first order. By November (44 B.C.) he was inducing a large part of the army, which Antonius had gathered in South Italy, to reject the consul's officers and to receive him as commander.

Matters were now again close to civil war. In Rome, Cicero and his friends grew bolder as Antonius's power seemed weakening. Gathering what forces still were loyal, Antonius marched from Rome northward, planning to destroy Decimus Brutus's army in Gaul, then carry the war further. Freed from his presence, Cicero made the Senate House ring with a series of fiery attacks, known as the *Philippics*.<sup>1</sup> No compromise remained possible. Octavian put his legions at the disposal of the Senate. The new consuls for 43 B.C., Pansa and Hirtius, assembled armies; martial law was proclaimed; every step, in short, taken to destroy Antonius.

He, meantime, was besieging Decimus Brutus in the North Italian city of Mutina. In an attempt to relieve the city, the combined armies of the consuls and Octavius defeated Antonius, although both of

<sup>1</sup> From their likeness to the original "*Philippics*" of Demosthenes against Philip of Macedon.

the consuls were mortally wounded in the engagement. Antonius retreated hastily towards Transalpine Gaul; and for a moment Cicero at Rome believed that peace and liberty had returned.

**3. The Avenging of Cæsar.** — Never was hope more blasted than that of Cicero. The real decision lay all with young Octavian, yet the Senate failed to realize the need of humoring him. Believing Antonius finally disposed of, and that in the East Marcus Brutus and Cassius were assembling powerful armies, it seemed safe to ignore this very young man who bore the name of the hated Dictator. No especially high honors were voted him for his part in the victory. He asked for a consulship<sup>1</sup> and a triumph; these were refused. Probably there came to his ears a saying of Cicero's, "The young man is to be praised, complimented, and thrust aside." To make matters worse, the Senate was considering the undoing of the land grants of Cæsar to his veterans. This was enough to incense the soldiers. A deputation of four hundred men from Octavian's army waited on the Senate; to ask the consulship for their leader. A centurion, — one Cornelius, — standing before the Conscrip Fathers, touched his sword-hilt, saying abruptly, "If you will not give it,

<sup>1</sup> Being under the proper age, he needed a special permission to be allowed to stand for election by the people.

this will." He was in fact announcing the coming of the Roman Imperial System, of which the key-stone was to be the rule of the State by the man who held the allegiance of the army. But still the Senate temporized. Octavian sent friendly messages to Antonius. Decimus Brutus was vainly trying to make his way around the Adriatic to Marcus Brutus in Macedonia, and was destined to be deserted by his men and be slain on the march. No other troops were at hand to guard Rome when Octavian advanced upon the city. No defence was possible. The young man was duly elected consul, with his cousin as colleague; the decree of outlawry was passed against Cæsar's murderers, and Octavian went north again to hold conference with Antonius.

Antonius had been at his best when rallying his troops after the disaster near Mutina. He had showed great courage, gallantry, and fortitude. Now he would treat Octavian on terms of equality. The third factor to consider was Lepidus, who now, as governor of Spain, controlled a large army, and who had broken with the Constitutionalists. It did not take long for these three men to reach an agreement to share the dictatorial power: "Triumviri for the establishing of the Republic" they caused themselves to be styled. For five years they were to name the ordinary magistrates and to con-

trol the destinies of the State. To make certain that no insurrection broke out in Italy, while they were crushing the "liberators" in the East, a wholesale proscription of past and presumptive enemies was arranged. Octavian is said to have resisted this last feature, but had to give way. Especially he was unable to save Cicero, whom Antonius hated with a deep personal hatred. Lepidus allowed his own brother to be sacrificed, in exchange for Antonius's surrender of his uncle. The exact number of prominent men who thus perished cannot be told with certainty: the historian Livy says "one hundred and thirty senators and a great many knights." The most distinguished victim, of course, was Cicero (died December, 43 B.C.), who with all his faults must stand out as the greatest of Roman litterateurs and orators.

The triumvirs completed their task in 42 B.C., when, crossing into Macedonia, Antonius and Octavian brought the armies of Marcus Brutus and Cassius to bay at **Philippi**. A first battle was practically a draw, but Cassius, believing for a moment that all was lost, committed suicide. In a second battle Brutus's army was routed, and he also slew himself. The dream of "liberation" had vanished. The only question was, How would the triumvirs rule the world?

**4. The Rule of the Triumvirs.**—Of the three masters of the Roman world, Lepidus was the most insignificant. A fair military man, and important momentarily from the strength of his army, he was without the energy and political ability to form more than a makeweight to his more successful colleagues. Somewhat contemptuously he was offered the province of Africa. Marcus Antonius and Octavian were of harder stuff. At his worst, Antonius was an idling, luxury-loving debauchée; at his best, a leader of rare fortitude and military capacity, and no mean politician. But he was without wide statesmanlike vision. It is hard to imagine him completing the constructive work of Julius Cæsar. Left to himself, he might have become an ephemeral despot of the Oriental type, and won a flash of soldierly success, but would never have become a builder of the Empire. Of Octavian at this moment it would be hard to judge. He was still very young, and treading a perilous path. At Philippi the victory had been won by Antonius's army, not his. He was on uncertain terms of alliance with very selfish and unscrupulous confederates. It is not surprising that this cold, shy youth at first seemed likely to be brushed aside—in due time—by the more brilliant activity of Antonius.

Yet the fates of Rome ordered otherwise. By an

agreement after the victory, Octavian was to go to Italy and assemble forces to conquer Sextus Pompeius (son of Pompeius the Great), who had seized Sicily, and was holding the capital at his mercy by cutting off her grain supplies from abroad. Antonius, on the other hand, was to visit the golden East to levy tribute from the vassal kings, and later to arrange a great campaign — Alexander-like — for the conquest of the distant Parthians.

The chance for glory certainly seemed Antonius's, the more especially as in Italy his own brother Lucius set at nought the terms of agreement, and defied Octavian's power. A brief civil war waged around Perugia in Central Italy terminated his uprising (40 B.C.), and Antonius after some hesitation refused to make common cause with his brother; yet Octavian's embarrassments grew not less, especially as Sextus Pompeius, having assembled a large naval force, held all his attackers at bay, and the huge army of veterans — demanding rewards from Octavian which he could not promptly supply — almost threatened mutiny.

A new treaty made at Brundisium (40 B.C.) for a while eased the situation. Everything east of the Adriatic was to go to Antonius. Lepidus was to keep Africa. Octavian was to hold the rest of the Empire (including Italy). Antonius cemented

## THE BUILDING OF THE EMPIRE

the bargain by marrying Octavia, the sister of his young rival. As a next step Sextus was induced to cease his naval attacks, and receive peacefully Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and Achaia (Southern Greece), for possession (39 B.C.). This last bargain, however, was not loyally kept by either side. Octavian renewed the war. Thanks to the efforts of his very able friend and lieutenant, Agrippa, a fleet was at last assembled capable of dealing with the semi-corsair forces of Sextus. Defeated off Sicily (36 B.C.), the fallen chieftain fled to Asia, where a general of Antonius slew him. Simultaneously came the fall of Lepidus. He had crossed to Sicily avowedly to aid Octavian, but soon claimed the island for himself. His soldiers deserted him; he was reduced to beg Octavian for his life. The conqueror forced him to resign his province of Africa, then sent him to Rome, where he dwelt safely till his death (13 B.C.), not even being stripped of his dignity as Pontifex Maximus (head of the Roman religion).

Octavian was thus at last triumphant in the West. Meantime, in the East, Antonius was becoming involved in one of the most famous romances of history. Cleopatra, heiress of the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt, had already cast her fascinations around Julius Cæsar. She now was in her twenty-eighth year: not perhaps a woman of remarkable physical beauty,



but with a wit, magnetism, talent that made the somewhat open-hearted triumvir an easy victim. The story of their first meeting (41 B.C.) at Tarsus, in Cilicia, when in her barge of state, with silver oars, and amid music and perfumes, she glided up the Cydnus, has passed into poetry. No doubt a desire to obtain, through her, command of the treasures of Egypt had its influence on the Roman; no doubt desire to secure political advantages by an intrigue with the great triumvir reacted on the Queen; yet one need not doubt there was a considerable intermingling of genuine human passion.

5. **The Fall of Antonius.** — Worldly expediency at first required that Antonius should quit the company of his Egyptian paramour and live in at least outward harmony with his noble and high-minded bride, Octavia; but the cold and stately virtue of the Roman lady was a scant counterpoise to the voluptuous enchantments of the Oriental. In 37 B.C. Antonius left Octavia in Italy and never saw her again. He plunged into his struggle with Parthia, trying very obviously to build up a huge monarchy in the East, perhaps not in entire subjection to Rome. His great campaign into Media (36 B.C.) was in the main disastrous; but Antonius was remarkably successful in keeping the loyalty of his troops, and for a while a considerable faction at Rome sup-

ported his claims and wishes in opposition to those of Octavian. More and more, however, the sensuous charm of the East was gaining over the erstwhile vindicator of Cæsar. He appears increasingly as a mere sultan. He deliberately styled Cleopatra "Queen of Queens." He declared her children (borne to him by her, or, it was alleged, by an earlier connection to Julius Cæsar) kings and queens of provinces conquered by Roman legions. A keen fear began to exist in Rome that Antonius actually intended to transfer the capital to Alexandria. Under these circumstances, with the personal insult to Octavia added, his relations to Octavian grew ever colder.

While thus the senior joint-ruler was becoming unpopular in Italy, the junior ruler was quietly strengthening himself in public esteem. Law and order had been secured at home. In person, or aided by the skilful Agrippa or by other generals, Octavian had made wide conquests in Illyricum and Pannonia, insuring the safety of the Roman frontier to the northeast. A dangerous uprising in Gaul was stamped out. Octavius, despite the anomalous foundation of his government, was gaining a name for firmness, moderation, leniency, in marked contrast to the stories of the despotic caprices of his Eastern rival.

The breach (long foreshadowed) came in 32 B.C., each side alleging many grievances, the one underlying cause being that their respective ambitions were incompatible. But Octavian was able to take the hopes and good wishes of the great majority of the Italian people with him into the struggle. It was really another round in the long duel between East and West, which began at Marathon or earlier, and of which the twentieth century sees not yet the end. Antonius had behind him a goodly number of regular Roman legions, and all the riches and might of the East. He had assembled a vast fleet, Cleopatra supplying a large contingent of heavy war galleys. A smaller but more mobile flotilla of lighter war-ships had been collected by Agrippa, and it was by sea power that the fate of the Ancient World was decided.<sup>1</sup> Early in 31 A.D. Octavian and Agrippa began a joint attack by land and sea upon Antonius's forces, disposed in their camps and havens, in Western Greece over against Italy. It was soon plain that Antonius had lost the confidence of his officers and friends. His forces were at length confined to a spot near the promontory of Actium; and conditions looking serious both by land and

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that this battle of Actium was the last pitched sea-fight of first importance till well along in the history of the Middle Ages. There was some naval warfare of a limited type in 194 A.D. and in 323 A.D.

sea, Cleopatra earnestly advised leaving garrisons in Greece, and at least withdrawing the fleet to Alexandria.

This was not cowardice, but probably sound wisdom. The further from their base in Italy, the deeper into the East Octavian and Agrippa were compelled to go, the greater the chance of defeating them; but when on the 2d of September, 31 B.C., Antonius ordered his ships to put out from Actium, Octavian's squadrons, forewarned and ready, at once attacked them, and a desperate battle raged all the afternoon. The heavy ships of Antonius for long beat off the lighter hostile galleys; but in an evil moment Cleopatra — anxious not to fight but to fly — signalled to her Egyptian squadron to make off. In the confusion following, Antonius's cause was hopelessly lost. The remainder of his ships were overpowered, fighting gallantly often to the last. Antonius, believing all was over, fled after Cleopatra. Soon afterward his large land army — bereft of its leader and hopeless — surrendered.

The Empire was won. It remained to be seen whether Octavian's career in power would be longer than that of his mighty predecessor and kinsman. To pursue Antonius to Alexandria, whither, guided again by his evil star, he had followed Cleopatra; to overpower his last resistance, and drive him to

suicide; to capture Cleopatra, but see her escape from his power by another suicide (30 B.C.), — it is alleged by the bite of an asp, — these were the mere aftermath of the victory.

It was now fourteen years since the death of Julius Cæsar. The world was in grievous need of rest. Many of the old champions of "Republican liberty" were dead; others had learned wisdom. Octavian had beaten down every foe. He made and unmade the petty vassal kings of the East. He abolished the royal dynasty of Egypt, and took the whole wealthy Nile valley as his personal possession. He was no longer the inexperienced lad, but a victorious warrior, a trained politician, a keen judge of men. The conquest of the East had given him ample treasures. The futures of seventy odd millions of men from the British Channel to the Euphrates were his to mould for one lot or another. A vast opportunity. It is now to see how he used it.

**6. Octavian becomes Augustus.** — It is needless to trace the various steps by which the conqueror gradually put off the extra-constitutional and dictatorial powers he had assumed at the time of his coalition with Antonius, but which must now be replaced with a more permanent régime. In 29 B.C. he celebrated at Rome a magnificent triple triumph, and closed the doors of the Temple of Janus as

solemn declaration that the period of war was over. Cautious, cold-blooded, merciful now because convinced that mercy was the best policy, this successor of the great Cæsar began to organize that mighty fabric which was to endure substantially intact for two centuries, and then — with increasing signs of alteration and decay — for three more, — the Roman Empire.

The raw material was at hand; the preliminary work had been done. All awaited the touch of the master. Never before had the Syrian and Spaniard, Egyptian and Batavian been under a common yoke, made ready for a common destiny. Old things had passed away before the swords of the legions, and all things were ready to become new. The Roman Republic had conquered the world, but it had not known how to govern it, any more than it had known how to govern itself. The last century of the Republic had been one of great misery to the subject peoples, — exposed to the rapacity of corrupt governors and of still more corrupt "*publicani*," — the leasers of the right to collect the taxes. Now it was necessary — if the whole fabric was not to dissolve — to reorganize the provincial administration on a basis of fair consideration for the subject peoples, — perhaps for no better reason than that bad government in the end reacts upon the

governing classes. Also Rome and Italy must be reorganized. There must be an end to the misdeeds of a Senate of oligarchs, and a popular assembly of Forum loiterers. The courts must be purified and freed from bribery. Public office must be again made a public trust. The agricultural sections of Italy — the best recruiting ground for the legions — were declining sadly. Means must be found to repopulate them. Manners and morals at Rome were becoming hideously bad. They must be reformed. The old state religion was almost beneath the contempt of men steeped in the Greek philosophy. But religion was a powerful adjunct to Roman or Greek government; therefore it too must be revived. The army had swollen to enormous size, thanks to the civil wars. The veterans were insatiable in demands for donatives and land grants. The legions must be put on an efficient peace footing, and the veterans satisfied or at least quieted.

All these problems waited Octavian for settlement, yet he dared not pose openly as the benevolent despot. He must save the consciences and susceptibilities of men who still called Rome a "free commonwealth." He must avoid the hated term "*Rex*." He must remember his great-uncle's catastrophe, must never be called dictator or king; must preserve the semblance of the old constitution,

while actually he should become head of a new military monarchy.

The later historian, Cassius Dio, represents Octavian holding a solemn conference with his bosom friends, Agrippa and the subtle, unpretending, but not less valuable, Mæcenas. The advantages of monarchy and non-monarchy are carefully discussed. Agrippa argues that the monarch's lot is a precarious one, and advises his chief to enact a few needful reform laws, then to retire from office. Mæcenas argues that it is impossible to retire now; better to set up a sovranity, but with the monarchical forms carefully disguised. The advice of Mæcenas is taken: Octavian resolves to remain in power. The story of Dio is no doubt fanciful, but the problem of Octavian was not fanciful. In assuming to rule Rome, the ruler risked the constant danger of overthrow by a proud nobility and a turbulent and fickle populace still calling itself "the sovran people." The army seemed loyal to the new régime, but military monarchies are proverbially insecure. It speaks much for the skill of Octavian that he succeeded in his task, and died after a long and relatively tranquil reign.

In 27 B.C. he allowed an obsequious Senate to bestow on him the name *Augustus* (by which name hereafter we shall call him). By 23 B.C. he had



virtually settled the forms by which he was to exercise his government. Since the "Augustan Régime" virtually lasted through all the prosperous period of the Empire, it is wise to consider its points with some detail.

7. **The Augustan Régime; the Princeps.** — The head of the new monarchy was not a "king by divine right." In theory he was only a new magistrate among the many magistrates of the old Republic. But he exercised not so much new powers as, *combined in his person, the powers of several old annual magistrates, and now held these collective functions practically for life.* His regular title at first — so far as he had any one title — was *Princeps*; i.e. first in honor among his fellow-citizens and especially among the senators; and "the Principate" is the term modern historians sometimes give to the early Empire. But as Princeps he had no special power, just as "Augustus" — "a name which roused no jealousy, yet vaguely implied some dignity and reverence from its long association with religion" — was at first a mere honorific title, albeit a unique one. The most usual term given in modern times to the Roman sovereigns is the "Emperors," i.e. *Imperatores*. Now an *Imperator* had been a victorious general, and the title had been borne by divers Roman conquerors

under the Republic, each hailed as "*Imperator!*" by his troops after a successful battle. It is true Julius Cæsar took the title, and in 29 B.C. Octavian also, as a special name, to point out that they were invested with supreme power. Afterwards it was borne by every Roman sovran, and forbidden to mere generals. It undoubtedly implied the chief command of the army, yet how this command was to be exercised was nowhere clearly defined. Simply as an "*Imperator,*" a war-chief, the new ruler would have found his power on an unsatisfactory basis.

But in fact Augustus and his successors were strong because they were vested with (I) The Proconsular Power; (II) The Office of Pontifex Maximus; (III) The Tribunician Power.

I. *The Proconsular Power.* — The proconsuls—substitutes, in Republican days, for the highly important consuls—had been the ordinary governors of the conquered provinces, and commanders of the armies outside of Italy. Augustus takes now to himself the "*Proconsular Imperium,*" that is, the right to supervise every part of the Roman dominion, to control the army in every province, and his power is considered higher than that of the local proconsuls and other magistrates. They must do his bidding. The army all over the Empire acknowledges him as general. He holds office for

life,<sup>1</sup> while the other short-term officials are impotent before him.

II. *The Office of Pontifex Maximus.* — This post Augustus did not assume until the death of its holder, Lepidus. It gave the sovran complete control of the state religion, the arrangement of public festivals, the nomination to and control of various priesthoods, etc., — a power not formidable in itself, yet dangerous to leave in private hands. An emperor was henceforth Pontifex Maximus for life.

III. *The Tribunician Power.* — The old "Tribunes of the People" had been instituted to protect the plebeians against patrician oppression. They had the right to veto, to prohibit the doings of any magistrate, or of the whole Senate even; to convene the Senate and deliberate with it; to assemble the people (the *comitia*) and ask them to vote laws. During their year of office they were inviolable. The man who harmed one personally became an outlaw, to be slain on sight by any citizen. The office had proven a tremendous one in the hands of a determined man.<sup>2</sup> Augustus took not the title

<sup>1</sup> The sovran power was in theory renewable every ten years, but this was soon reduced to a mere formality, and was simply the occasion for a grand festival in the ruler's honor.

<sup>2</sup> The famous Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Gracchus, who convulsed all Rome, were able to do so by virtue of their office as tribunes of the plebs.

of "Tribune" (a mere annual office, and shared among ten men), but the "*Tribunician Power*." He held this power all his life. Every emperor held it after him. He was now sacrosanct in person; he could convoke the Senate and popular assemblies; he could absolutely forbid the actions of any other magistrate. Within Rome, in short, this tribunician's power gave him the wide authority which outside of Rome the proconsular power conferred upon him. The combination of the two powers made the Princeps irresistible.

In theory, to be sure, he was merely the "first citizen" of a free commonwealth. "Augustus" he was called in honor, and "Cæsar" as a mere family name. He was the "Son of a God," for Julius, his adoptive father, had been deified. Still his dwelling on the Palatine<sup>1</sup> was hardly more magnificent than that of many a Roman millionaire. He avoided the trappings of Oriental royalty, remained open and companionable to his friends — in short, played the part of a typical noble gentleman. The harsh proscriptions of his youth were forgotten when he graciously pardoned would-be conspirators. The "leniency of Augustus" became

<sup>1</sup> The term "palace" is from Palatium, the hill where Augustus had his residence.

proverbial, but it was the leniency of an absolute monarch, albeit one without a crown.

8. **The Senate.** — Yet in appearance this monarch had a formidable rival — the Senate. Six hundred persons, scions mostly of the proudest and oldest Roman families, were members of this august body. They were distinguished in mere dress by the right to wear a broad strip of purple upon their tunics, and a special kind of shoes. For practical purposes they soon superseded the old assemblies of the people for voting laws (*senatus consulta*), and as a high court for state trials. With them the emperor advised on all great affairs. He drew his *concilium* — a private advisory committee — from their number. To be raised to the rank of senator would be the highest ambition of any mere provincial, something almost, though not quite, beyond his attainment. To become senator, a Roman must ordinarily be elected to one of the old Republican offices, — which still were maintained in form, — beginning with the rank of *quæstor* (treasury officer) and working upward to the still high dignity of consul. Such an election (in Augustus's day still awarded by the votes of the citizens) gave a life seat in this most venerable company.

In theory the emperors ruled with the advice and coöperation of the Senate, which posed as an

independent body. If the emperors controlled the issue of gold and silver money, the Senate controlled that of copper. If the emperors appointed the governors of the troubled frontier provinces, the Senate named and controlled those of the peaceful interior districts.<sup>1</sup> The individual senators were required to have a property worth 1,000,000 sesterces<sup>2</sup> (and many had vastly more), so that the mere wealth of the collective body made it important. Lastly, when emperors were made and unmade, the confirming of a new princeps, the decreeing the deification or condemnation of the memory of a dead one — this, too, belonged to the Senate.

But in reality the powers of this famous body were an empty show. As a rule the Senate was a mere cloak to conceal the tyranny or ratify the just wish of the head of the legions. By pretending to honor it, and govern through it, Augustus could

<sup>1</sup> Under the first principate, the Emperor took the direct rule of Northern Spain (Tarraconensis), Lusitania, the two north Gallic provinces, Noricum, Pannonia, Rætia, Mœsia, Cilicia, Galatia, Syria and Egypt. The Senate had Africa, Asia, Southern Spain (Bætica), South Gaul (Narbōnensis), Sicily, Sardinia, Illyricum with Dalmatia, Macedonia, Achaia, Crete with Cyrene, Cyprus, and Bithynia with Pontus. Later annexations went almost entirely to the Emperor, and there were many subsequent divisions and exchanges of provinces. See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> A little over \$40,000, though Roman money had vastly greater purchasing power than the money of to-day.

call himself "Princeps," when he was actually Dictator. In the course of history the Senate as a body proved itself of no fibre or true nobility, ready to flatter the worst vices of the worst emperors. And though the better emperors treated it with much honor and consideration, this was largely because of the prestige of the body, and of the worth of some individual members, rather than because the Roman Senate was still that "Assembly of Kings" which it had once been boasted to be in the best days of the Republic.

**9. The Equites and Ordinary Roman Citizens.** — The senators virtually constituted an hereditary class; the direct descendants of senators were members of the *ordo senatorius*, enjoying the highest kind of nobility, and usually the only persons eligible for election to those offices which in turn gave seats in the Senate. Ranking below them came the second order of nobles — the *Equites* — or, as often Englished, "the knights."

The Equites originally had been citizens of sufficient means to keep a cavalry horse. By Augustus's time, with the coming of a large professional army, this requirement had lost most of its importance. Generally speaking, to be an *Eques*, one must have possessed 400,000 sesterces (\$16,000), be the son of free parents, and be of good standing

in the community. Thus qualified, one could hope to enter on civil or military offices leading to about any honor short of the Senate, especially to "præfectships" and "procuratorships" — those numerous administrative posts required by the new Empire, and often more influential and profitable than the old consulship.

The Equites also were the jurymen in the regular Roman courts of the period. The majority of them, however, were engaged in commerce and general business. They were indefatigable money-lenders, promoters, syndicate managers. The wealth of an Eques — who preferred business to public life — might often exceed that of all save a few senators. Nevertheless, being frequently men of rather humble birth, the emperors often preferred to use Equites as officials, in place of the more lordly senators. The governor of the great province of Egypt was thus always an Eques.

The Equites had their honors as well as the senators. They wore the gold ring, and the narrow purple stripe on their tunics. They had seats of honor at public festivals. If they entered public service, they received high-sounding titles — *egregius*, *perfectissimus*, and to a favored few *eminentissimus*. Equites without office, and living away from Rome, were called commonly *splendidi*; and "splendid"



no doubt seemed their wealth and state to the subject provincials.

Beneath the Equites came, of course, the non-noble "plebeians." A large fraction of the ancient world by this time enjoyed Roman citizenship. The Queen of the Tiber had in the main avoided the blunder of Athens, that of refusing her franchise to the peoples she conquered. Practically all Italy had the Roman franchise, and many "citizen-colonies" were being founded in the provinces. Also many isolated provincials were rewarded with citizenship for service to the State, and presently even whole communities, as they gained the favor of an emperor — sometimes with the full "Roman" citizenship, sometimes with a partial "Latin" right.

The privileges of the citizens as against the subject provincials were partly fiscal — an exemption from the direct taxation which weighed more or less heavily on the provinces; partly political — only citizens, of course, being eligible for governmental offices; but probably in the main legal — the citizen being sure of the protection of the firm Roman law, of a certain amount of prestige and advantage if he got into litigation with a provincial, and of safety from the somewhat irresponsible behavior of the local magistrates. It was a mighty advantage to St. Paul to be able to boast "*Civis Romanus*

*sum!*" and to "appeal unto Cæsar" (*i.e.* Nero) when the Jews accused him before Festus. This privileged class of the population was continually growing, until to be a "Roman" by no means implied being an Italian. An inscription probably of Augustus (at about the time of his death) sets the number of enrolled Roman citizens at 4,937,000. If we reckon in a corresponding number of women and children, the whole number of "Romans" may be perhaps 17,000,000, — possibly one-fifth to one-fourth of the entire Empire, and their number continued for long to increase.

**10. The Provincials.** — What was the population of this vast world Empire organized by Augustus? Accurate statistics there are none; guesses — more or less careful — are many. From a minimum of 40,000,000 they run up to over 85,000,000. Probably the truth lies somewhere between. It is likely that at its best days the Empire boasted 60,000,000 to 75,000,000, a larger number of men than came ever again into one civilized polity — barring China — until very recent times,\* and the task of coalescing them into a unit, of absorbing their race antipathies, levelling their national barriers, of making Gaul and Egyptian alike into "good Romans," was a task to which the practical Italian statesmen had to bend all their energies. For the moment it was

enough that nowhere was any formidable rebellion raised against Roman power, — that a decree could go out “from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.”

Nowhere was the Roman genius happier than in dealing with these problems. Local creeds and cults were tolerated when not seditious or horrible.<sup>1</sup> So far as possible, the local governments, and institutions of villages and towns were left standing. Certain fortunate communities were admitted as “Allies of Rome,” nominally independent, free from the intrusion of the local governor. Athens was such a favored town. It was the alliance of the lion and the lamb, but the lion did not assert his strength needlessly.

The average provincial was indeed subjected to a relatively heavy taxation, — a land-tax on farmers, a poll-tax on traders and townsmen, a tax on the products of mines, a customs tax at the provincial frontiers, and, notably in Egypt and Africa, a tax in corn for the special supply of the ever hungry capital. But, thanks to the fairness of the assessments, the abolition of the old abuses in collecting, the watchfulness of the emperors over their own officials, while extortion was not unknown, it was

<sup>1</sup> The Romans had to suppress the Druid worship in Gaul, because it employed human sacrifice.

relatively rare. The provincials in the main paid their taxes cheerfully. If they reflected on their burdens, they could consider that they probably had paid much more to their one-time native princes, that the Roman rule meant law, order, protection from invasion, non-interference in cherished local institutions, and an opportunity for commerce and intercourse throughout the whole Mediterranean basin and far beyond, — the greatest peace and freedom for trade and enjoyment the world had ever known. Only certain peculiar nations like the Jews grumbled. In the main the striking feature about the Roman Empire was the cheerfulness with which most provinces submitted to its rule, and the absence of armed attempts to throw off the imperial supremacy.

**II. Slaves and Freedmen.** — Yet none can deny the darker side to this picture. At the bottom of the social ladder were the slaves. Slavery in ancient times was such a matter of course that no man dreamed of disputing its morality. Hundreds of menials swarmed every senatorial palace, — blond German porters, dark Syrian valets, bright-eyed maids from Greece. The lot of the house slaves was not miserable. Probably they had too much time for idleness. Infinitely more wretched were the farm slaves (tilling most of the great estates of Italy

and spreading the foul system into the provinces), working in chain-gangs under the lash, penned at night in underground prisons (*ergastula*). Panting, cursing, hopeless, all but beasts, it is no wonder Roman writers on farming spoke of them as "Speaking Tools," — only a little different from "Semi-speaking Tools," the cattle, and "Mute Tools," the ploughs and mattocks. It was deliberately argued that it was cheaper to work a slave to death and buy a new one than to try to spare the old slave and doctor him. In Augustus's day — thanks to the conquests — the supply of slaves was abundant and cheap. An efficient farm hand brought less than \$100; a handsome cup-bearer, a clever accounting clerk, a trained Greek schoolmaster, a pretty dancing girl, of course, brought far more. Slaves were used in place of hired artisans in all manner of factories, or as shopman's clerks. For the moment they were far cheaper to the employer than free hired labor, and free labor in the farms and trades of Italy and elsewhere was close to being ruined. Presently the day would come when the legions would cease to conquer, and since slaves seldom could bring up families, the whole labor supply of the world was dried up. But that disaster seemed far away in the time of Augustus.

Sombre as was the slavery of the Empire, still the

motives of humanity and mere desire to *seem* generous led to very frequent manumissions.<sup>1</sup> The freedmen were under a social stigma, but their aptitude for work, learned in a rough school, helped them in business. "Rich as a freedman" became a proverb. They continued as the clients and confidential agents of their ex-masters. The freedman of a magnate might be himself a highly important person. The freedman of an emperor was often, as will be seen, a very powerful prime minister. Many a famous man of the Empire was a freedman, and in 217 A.D. there reigned an Emperor (Macrinus) who, his enemies asserted, had once been a slave himself. Yet despite these notable exceptions, the moral and economic millstone of slavery must not be forgotten, hanging as it ever did around the neck of the Roman world.

**12. The Army.** — Behind the princes, the Senate, the citizen body, the provincials, the teeming millions of many lands and tongues, was the power that really held this vast fabric safe and compact, — the Roman army. Its prime function was no longer to conquer, but to protect; for, barring some wretched Germans in the North, some semi-barbaric Parthians

<sup>1</sup> Probably the faithful slave of a kind master could hope for release in about seven years; or he might be allowed to work for himself, save a little fortune (his *peculium*), and buy his release.

beyond the Euphrates, there seemed hardly a foreign foe worth fighting. One of Augustus's first tasks upon restoring peace was to disband a large part of the huge armies collected by the civil wars. But twenty-five legions (5000-6000 men each) were retained,<sup>1</sup> for the most part distributed along the exposed Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates frontier, while a few detachments and militia put down rioters and brigands in the peaceful interior provinces. Supplementing the regular troops of the line — the legionaries — was about an equal number of irregular cavalry and light infantry (*auxilia*) for special service. The armies of the Republic had been recruited almost exclusively in Italy, but Italians were losing their fondness for arms, thanks to the long peace. It was necessary to recruit more and more in the provinces, — at first among the Roman citizens there residing,<sup>2</sup> — by holding out money and land grants (besides the regular pay) as a bonus on discharge after twenty years of faithful service. Thus in time the ruling race ceased to predominate in the very instrument of its power — the army.

The 300,000 odd men in the army were stationed in large fixed camps at suitable intervals on the fron-

<sup>1</sup> That is the number in 23 A.D.; possibly Augustus at first kept fewer.

<sup>2</sup> Non-Romans could enlist in the *auxilia* — the irregular cohorts.

tier, ready for prompt action at the word from their emperor. In Italy itself were quartered nine picked cohorts of 1000 each (at first only three actually stationed in Rome), the famous *Prætorian Guard* of the Cæsars, a reserve against an invader, a handy force for curbing a revolt. For long few recruits saving Italians were eligible to this imperial guard. It was distinguished by a shorter term of service and higher pay than the regular legionaries. Its commander, the "*Prætorian Præfect*," was naturally one of the most important officers of the monarchy; and again and again he and his men were to make and unmake emperors.

A Roman legion was a permanent organization often with a proud history. It had a number, — like a modern regiment, — and usually a name, *e.g.* the "Minervan," the "Constant." Its commander-in-chief, a deputy of the emperor, was known as the *legatus legionis*. His regular working subalterns were six "Military Tribunes," commonly young men of equestrian or senatorial rank, and with their career before them. But probably the fighting efficiency of the legion depended on the sixty *centurions* (non-commissioned officers), who flogged the new recruits into good discipline with their vine-stocks, and saved many a battle by their well-trained valor. Discipline was stern but not unreasonable.



The men were in the main humanely treated. There was an efficient hospital corps. The yearly pay of a common soldier (900 sesterces = \$36) seems extremely small, but probably sufficed in days of very cheap labor. There were promotions and decorations for the brave and faithful. The accession of a new emperor, a victory, or even an imperial birthday usually meant a liberal *donativum*, — a cash bonus to every soldier. In battle the well-aligned legionary formation, and the Roman heavy javelin and short cut-and-thrust sword usually meant prompt success.

This army, in short, was as perfect a military instrument as the world has ever seen. As yet it was obedient to its officers and its emperor. It did not realize its power to make the civil government the mere instrument of its whim. The main criticism to be passed on it was that it was too small. Three hundred thousand men could hardly suffice to police and defend so vast an empire.

**13. The Financial System.** — The chief taxes of the provincials have already been stated. The free Romans boasted themselves exempt from "tribute," *i.e.* direct taxation. Were not they the lords, whose cost the subjected world must bear? They were nevertheless exposed to a five per cent inheritance tax which brought large sums into the

public coffers. Under the Augustan régime, however, the treasury department was divided: the revenues of the provinces which the Senate controlled still went into the old treasury at the Temple of Saturn by the Forum, — the *Ærarium*. The emperors had their special treasury for the income of their own provinces. This treasury was the famous *Fiscus*. Out of it had to be paid the army and much of the cost of general administration. Some attempt was made to keep the *Fiscus* and the privy income of the emperors separate, but under the bad emperors the two were often practically confounded. As might have been expected, the *Fiscus* continually gained in importance at the expense of the *Ærarium*, which in time became simply the city-treasury of Rome. Controlling the *Fiscus*, however, from the first, the emperor virtually disposed of the bulk of the public resources; the “vast power of the purse” was his, in addition to his formal governmental functions. If he were an Augustus, he could pour out his millions on public benefactions; if a Nero, on extravagant private pleasures.

14. **Religious Revival.** — The century before Augustus had been an unbelieving age. The Roman upper classes had substantially adopted the Greek philosophy which made the old pagan faith absurd to a thinking man. Whether Stoics — holding to a

high, stern type of high puritanical virtue — or Epicureans — counting well-being the only good, — the educated Roman feared neither God nor devil. Cicero was a sceptic, Julius Cæsar very likely an atheist. The untaught multitude still worshipped Ra in Egypt, Zeus in Greece, Tarann in Gaul, and earned only tolerant contempt from their rulers. But Augustus realized that a State without religion lacks one of the surest props to morality and patriotism. His own private beliefs one need not inquire, but he deliberately refurbished the old Roman religion, and gave its forms at least outward vitality. Ancient temples were rebuilt, new ones were erected. The Emperor especially professed devotion to the glorious sun-king Apollo, to whom he erected a stately fane on the Palatine. In 17 B.C. Augustus celebrated the *Ludi Sæculares*, a solemn festival of great pomp, supposedly to come only once in a hundred years, — a kind of religious consecration of his reforms and legislation. For a while at least the world became more religious outwardly; and gradually we meet that reaction from the unbelief of the age of Cicero, until, ere Christianity wins its triumph, the dying paganism of the Empire has run off into strange excesses of credulity and superstition even among the upper classes.

Along with this religious revival went an attempt

by Augustus to check the prevailing immorality and social disintegration. Divorces were frightfully common,<sup>1</sup> and "celibacy was the order of the day." Merely to keep up the number of citizens Augustus forced a reluctant Senate and people to concur in laws putting unmarried men and childless men at a disadvantage in receiving legacies, and giving certain official preferences and exemptions to the father of three lawful children.<sup>2</sup> These laws were very unpopular, yet, despite the distrust of moderns in such sumptuary legislation, it is possible that Augustus's efforts produced some effect, though the moral conditions of the millions of his Empire long continued indescribably bad.

**15. The Worship of the Emperor.** — Not content with reviving the formal worship of the old gods, Augustus fostered a new cult peculiar to his régime, — the worship of the emperor. Already his adoptive father, Julius Cæsar, had been enrolled — by solemn statute — as a *divus*, entitled to temple, priests, prayer, sacrifice, and Augustus could boast himself, while still living, as "Son of a Divinity." After Augustus's own death, he and each succeeding emperor (who

<sup>1</sup> It was even alleged that Roman ladies reckoned the years not by the annual consuls, but by their divorced husbands.

<sup>2</sup> The honors of "A Man with Three Children" were regularly bestowed through special dispensation by the later Emperor on favorites who could not comply with the law.

was not declared an infamous tyrant by the Senate) was enrolled also as a *divus*, so that in time there arose a regular imperial pantheon. To a servile age — especially to the Oriental part of the Empire — it seemed natural enough to recognize the wielders of such vast power as “divine.” Augustus was himself awarded practically divine honors by Eastern communities even while he lived. A hard-headed statesman like himself doubtless took this “divinity” at true value; but its use in fostering a spirit of loyalty to the Empire was not to be overlooked. Swearing by the “genius of the Emperor” and offering incense to his image became a kind of oath of allegiance to the new political order. In the provincial cities a special order of priests sprang up, — the *Augustales*, — devoted to the cult of the emperors. Since freedmen were usually excluded from city office, they were often elected to this priesthood, the members of which were allowed the purple robe and the seat of honor of magistrates, thus playing on their vanity and attaching to the Empire a very influential and wealthy class. Also in the different provinces “Councils” (*Concilia*) of the deputies of the different towns were allowed to gather for the purpose of common worship of the emperors, but also of sending petitions direct to Rome of complaint against the local governor. In this manner a very mild kind of popular repre-

sentation was established, and an efficient check kept upon the misdeeds of otherwise irresponsible officials.

**16. The Pax Romana; General Prosperity of the Age.** — Never had the world known a peace and prosperity like that of Augustus. The imperial galleys chased pirates from the seas; the armies checked brigands by land. Taxation was equitable. Litigation before a Roman governor was in the main remarkably prompt and just. The result was a great development of commercial and material prosperity. At Rome Augustus set the example by his building policy, changing the city “from brick to marble,” many great millionnaires of the aristocracy aiding him. The city began to become that vast congeries of public plazas (*fora*), parks, halls of justice and trade (basilicas), porticos, theatres, amphitheatres, palaces, public and private, which have made imperial Rome majestic even after her long ruin. Other cities developed in almost similar measure. It was an age of mighty pacific improvements. The Roman road system — already a network over Italy — began to radiate over the whole Empire; admirable highways, — frequently built by the now peaceful legionaries, — and even to-day in the deserts of North Africa, in the wilds of Asia Minor, where the civilized traveller seldom penetrates, may be found the Roman

road, its hard stones laid on a solid foundation and fitted with extreme nicety, defying the neglect of centuries;<sup>1</sup> or across the plain lands or mountains on their uncounted stone arches stretched the long gray aqueducts, transporting pure water to some distant city.

Commerce expanded by leaps and bounds. A great trade passing down the Red Sea sprang up with India, merchants from the Empire reaching the Malabar coast and Ceylon, and returning with pearls, rare tapestries, and spices. There are even rumors of an intercourse with China. Another set of traders penetrated Arabia for the much-desired incense, or into the heart of Africa for ivory. This Oriental trade centered at Alexandria, alleged to have been a city of 600,000 inhabitants, and where, in addition to her commerce, there were countless busy textile, glass, and paper (papyrus) manufactories. Antioch, beside the shimmering Syrian Orontes, boasted perhaps half a million, and was a mighty seat of trade. The looms of Tyre, Sidon, and other Syrian towns were never idle. Ephesus, with possibly 250,000, was a roaring commercial metropolis. Corinth was practically her peer. In the West, Carthage in North Africa, Lugdunum in Gaul, were centres of

<sup>1</sup> The prime value of these roads was, of course, for the rapid shifting of soldiers; but they were highly useful to commerce as well.

population, industry, and commerce. Puteoli in Italy was famous for its ironwares. The less civilized West naturally could not produce the manufactures of the East, but it could export lumber, pig-iron, tin, wool, and salted fish. The mines of Spain sent forth a fair quantity of gold and silver.<sup>1</sup> Above all, "every road led to Rome." Here, at the Eternal City, with its population of one or two millions, — all estimates must be vague,<sup>2</sup> — a cosmopolitan multitude jarred and jostled, inhabited the thousands of *insulæ* (the high tenement houses rented by the lower classes), and mingled in every form of commerce. There was nothing which it was impossible to buy in Rome. Gems, the rare triumphs of sculptors, the delicate manufactures of East and West, the pettiest wares, cattle, slaves, — everything was there. Along the streets entering the Forum ran the shops of the lordly bankers whose loans and credit system covered the known world, and who handled checks, bills of exchange, and joint-stock securities almost on a modern scale.

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered the ancients had nothing like the modern supply of precious metals from the United States, Mexico, Alaska, South Africa, and Australia.

<sup>2</sup> It is sometimes argued Rome never had over, say, 800,000, — a sufficient number to give the impression of a very great city in a day without "rapid transit." The evidence for such a low figure seems, however, inconclusive.



No wonder it is — considering this unprecedented prosperity — men were willing to assert that the Emperor was a god, to swear by his “genius,” and that travellers from far should seek a sight of him as of a present deity. If material prosperity be the highest good, that acme was almost reached in the age of Augustus.<sup>1</sup>

**17. Art and Literature.** — In addition to this abounding material prosperity, it must be remembered the Augustan age was that of the full bloom of Latin literature: Horace, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, were among the great poets of this “golden” period. Vergil wrote his *Æneid* really as a patriotic task, — the glorifying of the origins of all-powerful Rome. In a similar spirit Livy composed his history of Rome, unrolling the long pageant of kings, consuls, and conquerors from the mythical beginning to his own day. And if Latin letters were at their zenith, fostered by the Emperor and his clever adviser, Mæcenas, Greek letters, and especially Greek art, were by no means dead. The sculptors trained in the traditions of Pheidias, Scopas, and Praxiteles had indeed

<sup>1</sup> An inscription at Halicarnassus (Asia Minor) praises Augustus as “the saviour of humanity, whose Providence fulfilled the prayers of all men: land and sea are at peace, and cities flourish in lawful government, and prosperity in all things.” The poets of the period speak of “Age of Gold” as all but at hand, and survey with the greatest confidence the future.

lost much of their originality, and erred on the side of over-elaborateness; but they still produced a profusion of works of remarkable elegance and grace. The amount of sculptured marble hewn out under the Empire is incalculable. Especially the art of making really vital portrait busts was brought to remarkable perfection. These lifelike images of the gods, the emperor, the ancient worthies, the members of one's own family, were in every private palace, every forum. Almost it might be said the number of statues of the dead exceeded the number of the living.

**18. The Winning and Losing of Germany.** — The establishment of the *Pax Romana* did not, of course, imply that all restlessness ceased in the less-settled provinces. There was still a little fighting required in Spain. There were numerous petty kings in Asia who needed disciplining. The greater Parthian power had to be overawed by a firm display of arms; also the task of conquering the great block of land comprised by modern Bosnia, Serbia, and a part of Austro-Hungary, which lay, roughly speaking, between the Adriatic and the Danube, had to be completed.

The warlike but ill united and barbarous peoples in those regions were brought under the Roman yoke after much stout fighting, and Dalmatia,

Pannonia, Noricum, and Rhætia were finally enrolled among the provinces. However, along the Rhine frontier another problem presented itself, — the Germans; and face to face with this hardy folk Augustus was to meet his great humiliation.

Out of the plains and forests of Northern Europe and Western Asia, the Germanic peoples — one of the last comers into the family of European races — had begun to thrust themselves into the Roman world, about three generations before Augustus. In 102 B.C. the defeat of some of their wandering hordes by the great Marius had saved Italy from desolation. Julius Cæsar had hastened his conquest of Celtic Gaul partly to anticipate a conquest by the barbarous but highly martial Germans, thrusting in from the north and east. Dwelling in primitive villages with only the rudiments of civilization, obeying war-chiefs rather than kings, only uniting their tribes in the face of a great emergency, these forest children were nevertheless recognized from the outset as dangerous neighbors for the Empire. Moralists praised their chaste relations with women and their sense of rude honor. Soldiers had long known that the tall blond Teutons were, with equal arms and discipline, more than a match for the physically weaker men of the South. If the provinces of Gaul — now recognized as a prime part of the Empire —

were to be safe, the German tribes to the east and northward — at least as far as the Elbe — must be quieted. Then, given a century of peaceful life as provincials, the Roman process of assimilation would do its infallible work as elsewhere. The Germans would become civilized subjects of the Empire, happy in its rule, and their military spirit would only add to the fighting strength of the legions.

With some such purpose as this, in 12 B.C. Drusus, the stepson of the Emperor, was allowed to begin four campaigns which seemed to accomplish the Roman ambition. Despite the difficulties of navigation with his war fleet along the coast to the mouth of the Elbe, and of penetrating the almost trackless forest and swamp-land, — which then covered the northwest of modern Germany, — the task seemed accomplished. In 9 B.C. Drusus assumed the title of "Subduer of Germany." He had beaten down the scattered resistance of the Germanic tribes, and had conciliated the good-will of many of their chiefs. On his last campaign he died from a fall from his horse, — a real event in history, for Drusus was a man of tact and capacity. If he had lived to put the firm Roman impress on the land he had temporarily conquered, the face of all European annals might have been changed.

In the years following Drusus's death his brother,

Tiberius, conducted some expeditions to complete his work; but the Roman armies were more busy with the stubborn Marcomanni (in modern Bohemia) and with checking somewhat formidable revolts in the new Danube provinces, than in garrisoning in force the conquests beyond the Rhine. Years passed; it was 9 A.D. Nothing forewarned a terrible disaster; yet discerning men might have felt that Augustus did not use his customary good judgment when he sent (probably in 7 A.D.) **Publius Varus** to be governor of Germany. Varus had already ruled Syria, and had gained a name (fairly rare under the Empire) as an extortionate tyrant. "When he went to Syria, the province was rich and he was poor; when he left Syria, the province was poor and he was rich," we are pithily told. He failed to realize that in dealing with a bold, war-loving people — overawed for the moment, rather than conquered — great consideration was needed in accustoming them to the Roman régime. Their chiefs of the Chatti and Marsi were not to be treated like cringing Damascenes! But Varus was blind or mad. He imposed heavy taxes; he brought in the whole paraphernalia of the Roman law, — that was adapted only to a highly civilized community, — gave free scope to the chicanery of lawyers and legal processes, and outraged the simple Germans by crooked

decisions; he failed to conciliate the leading chiefs, and one of those chiefs — **Arminius** of the Cheruscan tribe — became the centre of a conspiracy against him.

Arminius had been honored by the Romans to the notable extent of being made an *Eques*; but he was not to be won over. How much his motives were selfish, how much he acted out of patriotic love for his tribe and people, no one — on existing evidence — can say. There was no lack of discontent, and Varus took no steps to allay it. Very masterfully Arminius (still playing the friend of Rome) and his fellow-conspirators prepared their countrymen, yet lulled the governor into security. With three legions Varus had spent the summer at a camp upon the Weser. On approach of autumn (9 A.D.) he marched back towards the Rhine. Once inside the strong garrison towns by the river, all would be secure. But a rumor came that a distant tribe had revolted; Varus resolved on a *détour*, to subdue the rebels ere reaching winter quarters. Once off the beaten paths, the heavily laden legionaries found themselves in direful swamps and forests, rendered worse by heavy rains. Even at the last, warnings came to Varus that Arminius was a traitor. He would not listen. The conspirators slipped away. Their bands were ready. A three days' battle began, — the battle of the *Teutoburg*

*Forest.*<sup>1</sup> The Romans at first held together, and fought their way onward amid great difficulties. But Varus was no commander to inspire his men in a crisis. The cavalry deserted in a cowardly manner, leaving the infantry to their fate. Varus, in despair, slew himself. Some of his men made a last gallant stand, but everything was lost. Many of the Romans yielded as prisoners, only to be sacrificed by the victors at the rude altars of their gods. All three of the eagles of the legions were taken. The Roman detachments in Germany were either destroyed or driven over the Rhine. In short, it was not defeat but annihilation.

Terrible was the news at Rome. The now aged Emperor strained all his powers to assemble new legions, lest the victorious Germans cross the Rhine into Gaul. Tiberius, the Emperor-elect, hastened to the curtailed frontier to reorganize the defences. It was hardly necessary. Arminius could not have held his disunited countrymen together for a decisive attack on Rome.

In 14 A.D. Augustus died, with the disaster of Varus unavenged. Vengeance was to come after a manner in the next reign, but not reconquest. The year 9 A.D. is a milestone in human annals. In it the Roman god Terminus, — the patron genius of the

<sup>1</sup> The place cannot be surely identified.

frontiers, — so long advancing, was to be turned back. Germany was never reconquered. Two and a half centuries later it was the Empire itself that was to be in peril from invaders out of the province lost by Varus.

**19. The Attempt of Augustus to found a Dynasty.** — Nevertheless, the importance of this loss must not be exaggerated. It was a wound to the pride rather than to the prosperity of the Empire. During the forty-five years between the battle of Actium and his death, Augustus enjoyed the sun of success and popularity almost beyond any other known monarch. Only in one great thing he had failure and heaviness, — in his private relations and his attempt to found a suitable dynasty.

Theoretically, the principate was no more hereditary than the old consulship. When the holder of such vast power died, it remained for the Senate and people — always with the ratification of the formidable army — to choose a new emperor. Augustus could not thus deliberately train up a crown-prince to succeed him; and as a sane and foreseeing man he surely knew that the next principate after his would have a vast deal to do in the destruction or perpetuation of the institutions he was elaborating. Accordingly, in an informal way, he undertook to arrange for a kind of heirship and succession, rendered the more



easy because the Roman system of having colleagues in almost every office made it possible to associate a younger man in one or another of the princeps's functions, which person could take up the *sole* burden as soon as the older ruler died. It was on some such theory and basis as this that Augustus began working.

Unluckily, from the outset, he lacked a son. In his youth, for political reasons, he had married a step-daughter of Marcus Antonius, then had put her away after the easy fashion of the times, and wedded (again through politics) a certain Scribonia, by whom he had (in 39 B.C.) his only child, a daughter, the notorious **Julia**. But in 38 B.C. he divorced Scribonia also, to contract a marriage which seems to have been based on real affection. He married the noble and talented **Livia**, — and with her as his Empress he passed his reign, never ceasing to cherish her, although she bore him no children.

But Livia brought him two stepsons, known usually to history as Tiberius (born 42 B.C.) and Drusus (born 38 B.C.). However, although their mother had hopes, Augustus would not designate these youths as his successors. He preferred to marry his nephew Marcellus — an amiable and popular lad — to his daughter Julia (25 B.C.), and showed plainly that he intended to introduce him by degrees into

partnership in the government. This action doubtless displeased Livia, and the Emperor's great minister, Agrippa, who might well expect a formal recognition of his right to succeed to the imperial power which he had done so much to create. But the project came to a tragic end when, in 23 B.C., a stroke of malaria carried off the young Marcellus,<sup>1</sup> and set all his uncle's schemes awry.

Augustus yet balked at the adoption of Livia's sons. He seems to have had a strong antipathy especially for the cold, unresponsive Tiberius. He now married his daughter to Agrippa, thus appeasing that powerful individual, and preparing the way for the succession of his own flesh and blood. Three sons and two daughters rewarded this union; but in 12 B.C. Agrippa — long the chief prop of his friend and master — died. Augustus now intended Agrippa's two older sons (mere children) for the sovereignty, and desired to wed Tiberius to their mother — not that he might succeed, but to act as the boys' guardian. Drusus, the younger stepson, was also in positions of trust, and was winning his laurels with the legions in Germany. But his death in 9 B.C. removed another

<sup>1</sup> Marcellus is nobly lamented in Vergil's *Aeneid* (bk. vi. 860 ff.) though we have no means of knowing whether he deserved all the eulogies. Octavia, his mother, gave 10,000 sesterces (\$400) per line to the poet, as reward for his really moving tribute.

support in the imperial house; and Tiberius, dissatisfied with the imperfect recognition given him, and probably by the criminal frivolity of the life lived by Julia, went into a kind of voluntary exile at Rhodes.

The young grandchildren were growing to manhood. The succession seemed firmly secured, but a fatality followed the house of Augustus. In 2 A.D. young Lucius Cæsar died; in 4 A.D. Gaius (his brother) perished of a wound received in Armenia. The third boy, Agrippa Posthumus, was incorrigible and semi-imbecile. The now aged Emperor had pinned his hopes on his elder grandsons. The fragments of his letters to Prince Gaius show him as warming with deep personal affection for these promising boys; now this love and expectation had begotten only bitterness. In addition, a new cup of sorrow had been already bestowed in 2 B.C. when the Emperor learned — what most of Rome had long known — that his only daughter and child had been leading a life of unblushing and notorious immorality. In wrath he banished the luckless Julia to a barren island off the coast of Campania. Her lovers were exiled. The Emperor never forgave her; and when informed that Phœbe, a freedwoman and attendant of hers, had committed suicide, was heard to exclaim in his bitterness, "Would that I were the father of Phœbe rather than of Julia!"

There was nothing for him now but to select Tiberius — the man he disliked — for his heir. Tiberius was recalled from Rhodes, and in 4 A.D. the Emperor caused him to be endowed with the imperial "tribunician power," and "adopted" him as his son. "This I do for the sake of the commonwealth," said Augustus, clearly expressing his own feelings; and another time he remarked of his successor, "I pity the Roman people being ground under his slow jaws!" Yet even now Augustus tried to limit his heir's power. Tiberius was required to adopt as his son and heir his own nephew, the son of Drusus, Germanicus, a winsome and popular young prince, who, it might be hoped, would prove a counterpoise to his austere uncle.

The end came to the long reign in 14 A.D. The defeat of Varus had been a mighty wound to the aged Emperor's pride, the one great failure in his outward policy. Rumor had it that Augustus let his beard and hair grow long, and would dash his head against the walls, crying, "Varus, Varus, give back to me my legions!" Yet he maintained his part of the uncrowned "first citizen" to the last. The final scene was at Nola, the 19th of August, 14 A.D. "If you think I have played my part on the stage of life well, applaud!" he spoke to the friends gathered at his bedside. He had indeed deserved the applause.

Great in the dazzling sense, as were Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, he was not. But to few men has it been given to accomplish more abidingly constructive work than he. So he passes — the precocious youth, the intriguing politician, the merciful, strictly cautious yet successful statesman, and builder of the Empire: the first Cæsar Augustus.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GREATNESS OF THE EMPIRE

1. **Tiberius** (reign 14 to 37 A.D.); **Internal Policy.** — A new hand was at the helm of state, but not an untried hand. As subordinate, and later as colleague of Augustus, Tiberius had learned all the processes of the government. He was a passing elderly man now, — fifty-five years old, — not likely to be affected by youthful giddiness of power. All evidence goes to show that he was an administrator of no mean order. But the intrigues of the court, his semi-banishment at Rhodes, the tardy recognition by Augustus, seem to have embittered him. He was hard and cynical. He lacked personal magnetism: what was worse, he won the hate of the cultured literary circle at Rome, — of the fine gentlemen of old Republican families, who were as yet unreconciled to the new imperial régime, and traduced it at every opportunity. Writing after their spirit, and drawing upon their literary memoirs, the great historian Tacitus (nearly a hundred years

later) has given us a picture of Tiberius unmatched for masterly portrayal of a gloomy, unscrupulous, bloodthirsty monster. More modern criticism has decided that many of the worst charges against the second Princeps are unproved, although there is much that cannot be explained away. Yet certain it is that the twenty-three odd years of his reign were years of prosperity and good government for the Empire, and if there were tyranny and discontent, they existed almost wholly\* at Rome.

In his dealings with the Senate — which readily confirmed him in the power that Augustus could only partially delegate — Tiberius showed at first the greatest consideration. He made it a constant rule to allow the most important matters to be submitted to it for discussion, but more important still, *he abolished the elections to office by the people* (long a mere farce with the Forum mob of Rome), and allowed the senators to elect to practically all the old regular magistracies.<sup>1</sup> Since an election as *quæstor* (finance officer) carried with it a life seat in the Senate, the Senate became now a practically self-perpetuating body, — possibly dangerous to the Princeps, had it possessed the stamina and popular

. <sup>1</sup> The Emperor could however greatly influence elections by "commending" favored candidates, whom the Senate dared not reject.

backing to resist him. The passing of the old pretence of "popular elections" seems to have awakened no great murmurs. At the same time the ordinary method of enacting laws became more and more by "*Senatus Consulta*" — "Decrees of the Senate," — without any formal reference to the "people." Both of these changes, however, were really outward recognitions of what had long been practical facts. The governmental machine of Augustus was simply being given a logical extension.

Really of greater importance was the move Tiberius made at the urgency of his Præfect of the Guard, Sejanus (of whom more hereafter). The whole force of Prætorian Guards (9000 men) was now concentrated at Rome in a single large cantonment.<sup>1</sup> This picked corps — wholly devoted to the Emperor — could be relied upon to silence with the sword any murmurs against his policy. It was a long step towards ending the pretension that the master of these swordsmen was only the "First Citizen of the Republic."

2. **Tiberius's Foreign Policy; Germanicus.** — Tacitus "has put forth his unrivalled powers to present as a foil to the gloomy tyrannical Emperor his gallant and beloved adopted son, Germanicus." He was only twenty-nine when Tiberius came to

<sup>1</sup> Augustus had only kept one-third of this force in Rome.



the throne. From the first we are given to understand that the new Emperor hated him and his virtues, and wished to be rid of him. If that were the case, Tiberius was exceedingly cautious in making his hate effective. After quelling a formidable mutiny in the Gallic legions, Germanicus undertook to avenge the death of Varus and to reconquer Germany. In 15 and 16 A.D. he made repeated campaigns beyond the Rhine and claimed to have won decisive victories. The eagles of the lost legions were retaken; the wife of Arminius was captured. The scene of the great defeat was visited, and the bones of the slain given honorable burial. But the conquest of the Germans was a weary work; victories over them were mere bolts shot into water. The victors had won a bit of swamp or woodland; the vanquished had dispersed in the forest. Apart from feelings of jealousy, Tiberius may well have questioned whether this remote province was worth winning back, and again whether the treasury could stand the drain of Germanicus's very costly campaigning. In 17 A.D. Germanicus was recalled to Rome and allowed a notable triumph, but Germany had not been recovered. Whether — if Germanicus had been let alone — he could have done the task, is one of the unsolved problems of history. Arminius, the hero of his country, perished in a private

feud in 19 A.D.; but the same year saw the death of his chief enemy. Germanicus had been sent to the East, to regulate the petty kingdoms there. His plans were thwarted, however, and his orders defied by Piso, governor of Syria, with — it was hinted — the secret approval of the Emperor and Livia, the powerful Empress-mother. Presently Germanicus fell ill at Antioch, and soon died. He believed himself poisoned by Piso, and begged his friends not to leave him unavenged. They remembered their pledge, and returned with his ashes to Rome, crying for vengeance upon the murderer. Piso was forced to return to Rome and stand trial before the Senate. He trusted that the Emperor would protect him; but though the poisoning charge was weak, he could not clear himself of the guilt of defying the orders of his superior officer. Tiberius refused to shield him from the popular clamor demanding vengeance for Germanicus, and Piso committed suicide.

There is no good evidence that Tiberius was guilty of thwarting Germanicus's German successes, or of plotting his destruction. If he had died in 19 A.D., he would have enjoyed a brief, colorless, but in the main honorable reign. Unluckily, he lived many years more, and fell under the influence of his evil genius — Ælius Sejanus.

**3. Sejanus and the Reign of Terror.** — It was the

misfortune of Roman emperors that they did not have a competent staff of trained civil servants ready to assist them in administering the colossal Empire. Augustus had got his noble friends to aid him as best he could; Tiberius — distrustful of and distrusted by the nobility — had to use humbler ministers, *Equites*, plebeians, freedmen. He found great relief from the burdens of government in the aid of the Præfect of the Prætorians — Sejanus. This underling of mere equestrian rank first made himself indispensable to the elderly Emperor by his zeal, ability, and seeming fidelity; then deliberately wrought to achieve his high-soaring ambition, — the principate for himself. If the story of palace intrigues were the true substance of history, the crimes of Sejanus would deserve a long volume. The wily minister set about to remove member after member of the imperial family, that no obstacle might remain betwixt him and his success. In 23 A.D. Drusus, Tiberius's own son, and (since the death of Germanicus) the heir-presumptive, died, seemingly by a chance malady. Eight years later the dark tale was to come out: how Sejanus had seduced the prince's wife, and through her could administer the poison. But Tiberius did not suspect the murderer. To strike down his foes and increase the confidence of the Emperor,

the Prætorian Præfect pretended to discover conspiracies against Tiberius among the nobility, with fearful consequences for the accused. Things grew worse when Tiberius — an embittered, sour man, who had always felt himself unpopular at Rome — retired from the city to the beautiful isle of Capri (26 A.D.). Thence, amid a perfect paradise of sensuous delights, he sent his orders to the slavish Senate at the capital, while Sejanus, as his representative at Rome, enjoyed greater power than ever. Most skilfully the indiscretions of every member of the imperial family were magnified to the Emperor. In 29 A.D. the aged but imperious Empress-mother, Livia (of whom Tiberius stood in no slight awe), died, and another check fell from Sejanus. Agrippina — widow of Germanicus — and her sons, Nero and Drusus, were disgraced and imprisoned. Sejanus began to think himself close now to the throne. He received adulation in the Senate; the provincials raised altars to him as to a god. He seemed on the point of being given “tribunician power” and declared the Emperor’s colleague; but as a matter of fact his master had begun to distrust him, though fearing to strike on account of his vast power, especially over the guardsmen. In October, 31 A.D., the crisis came. Tiberius at Capri was warned of a direct plot against himself. Delay would have been

fatal. A trusted officer — Macro — was hastened to Rome with private instructions. The Senate was convened early in the morning. Sejanus was lured into being present, by being told Macro had been sent to ask for him the coveted tribunician power. Then a purposely long and wordy letter from the Emperor was read, — that Macro might be making sure of the fealty of the Prætorians, — but at the end the letter demanded the punishment of Sejanus and his friends. In a twinkling the senators — ready at the beginning of the session to fawn on the great minister — shrank from him. He was hurried to prison. The fickle multitude threw down his statues and howled for his blood. He was promptly strangled in his dungeon, and his corpse dragged by the hook through the streets till it was cast into the Tiber.

Sejanus was dead, but the deeds of cruelty did not end with him. The obsequious senators committed new crimes in punishing “his friends,” — as if it were treason to have been friendly to the man the Emperor had delighted to honor. Tiberius had been rendered fearful and cruel by the discovery of how he had been duped by his most trusted confidant. He might well distrust all the world. He allowed the widow of Germanicus to commit suicide by starvation. Other members of the imperial family

perished violently, until it is reckoned that the whole ruling house was reduced from twenty persons to only two or three. Rumor had it that the old Emperor was abandoning himself to fearful debauches at his island villa. Rumor no doubt outran truth; but one may well guess that Tiberius was weary of the sham glamour of power. He felt himself hated, and lonely. What wonder if he tried to drink a passing sweetness out of the deadly cup of sensuality?

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At Rome the prosecutions for "treason," *i.e.* lack of respect for the Emperor, or for friendship with Sejanus, went on unabated. It was a profitable business to play the accuser (*delator*), for the self-appointed prosecutor in such cases enjoyed a share in the confiscated goods of his victim, and often a vote of thanks from the Senate, with public honors to boot. Many a great noble thus paid the penalty for an incautious remark; but less edifying than the fearful old man at Capri, than the money-grasping delators, was the spectacle of the lordly Roman senators striving piteously by their excess of zeal in voting prosecutions and condemnations to avert the ruin from their own individual heads. The reign of terror between the years 31 and 37 A.D. was enough to prove the Roman Senate unfit to rule alone.

Yet one must not exaggerate. The victims were

mainly in a very exalted but very narrow circle at Rome. The provinces continued well governed and fairly contented. "A good shepherd shears his sheep, but does not flay them," Tiberius had said. At a distance from the capital the reign continued popular. In March, 37 A.D., Tiberius died at Misenum, on the lovely Campanian coast. He had not been in Rome for ten years. He had practically adopted Gaius, a surviving son of Germanicus, as his heir, but had done nothing officially to arrange for his succession. As a ruler of the Empire he is worthy of praise; as the tyrant over the Roman aristocracy he is worthy of execration. Yet considering his natural timidity, betrayal by friends, unpopularity, personal isolation, the last feeling for him is one of pity.

4. **Gaius (reign 37-41 A.D.).** — Gaius, or to use a very familiar nickname, Caligula,<sup>1</sup> was the son of the well-beloved Cæsar Germanicus. He was twenty-five years old, and reputed to be of good heart and head. The people hailed him with joy, while the Senate made haste to vote him all the imperial powers. He began his reign with a series of reforms and popular acts of vengeance on the delators. For eight months he was full of benevolence and mag-

<sup>1</sup> "Little Boots," given him by the soldiers, when his mother was in the camp of the German legions.

nanimity. Then, after a serious illness, he plunged suddenly into a course of shamelessness and absurd excesses. The plain facts seem to have been that he had become mentally unstrung. Perhaps the mere pressure of tremendous power had unsettled wits that were none too normal at best. A catalogue of his follies is not history. To talk of proclaiming a favorite horse as consul, to declare himself a god and open a temple to himself as Jupiter Latiaris,<sup>1</sup> to force noblemen and *Equites* to fight as gladiators, to build a bridge of boats across the Gulf of Baiæ in Campania (for no practical object, but simply for childish self-pleasing), — these are samples, yet all intermingled with other acts of sheer licentiousness and cruelty. "This pretty neck must be cut whenever I please!" he once said jestingly to a consort.

It speaks well for the firmness of the mechanism of the Roman state that it was not hopelessly wrecked before the world was saved from this monster by the daggers of Chærea and Sabinus, stout officers of the Prætorians, who assassinated him in January, 41 A.D.

5. **Claudius** (reign 41–54); his Government; the **Winning of Britain**. — The murder of Gaius had been necessary. The scheme of Augustus provided no

<sup>1</sup> Quite different from allowing mere Orientals to hail him as a god, or from proclaiming a *dead* emperor divine.



machinery for removing an obviously unfit emperor. The climax, however, had come too suddenly; no one was prepared. Intense excitement reigned in Rome. The "urban cohorts," a kind of municipal guard and police, put themselves at the disposal of the consuls, who hastily convened the Senate. For an instant thoughts were entertained of restoring the Republic; the watchword *Libertas* was given out. Then came propositions to choose a new princeps, but not from the old Cæsarian house. There did not lack candidates. Unluckily, the consuls had only the urban cohorts, not the more powerful Prætorians, at their back, and "while the Senate deliberated, the soldiers took action."

The Prætorians had existed as guards of the emperor; they were devoted to the Cæsarian house and the Cæsarian idea. In the palace, as they searched for plunder, they found Claudius, younger brother of the lamented Germanicus. Fearful for his life, he had hidden behind a curtain. Forth they dragged him, not to slay, but to proclaim him Emperor. Recovering his nerve, Claudius presently promised the soldiers 15,000 sesterces each (\$600), if they would stand by him. The Senate gave up its vain discussion when the will of the Prætorians was known. Claudius was duly voted all the imperial honors and powers.

Not an auspicious beginning for a reign, surely, yet the reign was not a disastrous one. Claudius had been in feeble health in his youth. He had been despised as mentally harmless and worthless by his relatives. Sejanus and Tiberius had let him alone. Gaius's merry court had made fun of his stupidity. He had been allowed to be consul, yet had enjoyed practically no experience in public life. On the other hand, he was a bookish, learned man. He had written a ponderous history of the Etruscans, had dabbled in philology.<sup>1</sup> He had great veneration for ancient custom and precedent. He was always anxious to live up to the high duties of a Cæsar, to govern ably and justly, and he did not shirk a certain amount of hard routine work. He began his reign by pardoning most of the victims of Gaius's tyranny, and throughout his reign the provincial administration continued mainly in competent hands. In other words, Claudius proved himself a decidedly efficient, if by no means a brilliant, Princeps.

Besides divers acts extending the Roman franchise to a large fraction of Gaul, — a continuation of the Romanizing process there long in progress, and divers public works of magnitude, — *e.g.* the dredg-

<sup>1</sup> He invented three new letters for the Latin alphabet, which were dutifully used during his reign — then dropped.

ing and improvement of the mouth of the Tiber, to the great betterment of navigation, — the chief event in this somewhat prosaic reign was the conquest of Britain.

Augustus, in his dying advice, had urged that the Empire was large enough, and to shun further conquests. Caligula had set this admonition at defiance by destroying the native kingdom of Mauretania (modern Algiers and Morocco) and reducing the country to a province. Claudius ventured a step further. Julius Cæsar had landed in Britain, but the stout resistance of its Celtic inhabitants had induced him to withdraw after the promise of a tribute, which he well knew would never be paid. Since then the island had been left in peace; but it offered a standing invitation to Roman attack. By Claudius's day the legions were relatively unoccupied, and the attempt was made. In 43 A.D. the army (under the general Plautius) landed; the native resistance was beaten down; Claudius himself was hurried overland to the island to be present at the decisive battle, — a carefully arranged victory (43 A.D.). He was only on the island sixteen days, but could boast of doing what his great predecessor had attempted and failed. The Romans held Britain for three hundred and fifty years. At first they grasped only the tribes of the South. It

was two generations before the whole of modern England was theirs. But with a foothold once firmly gained, the ultimate conquest of the British tribes was certain.

**6. The Rule of Claudius's Wives and Freedmen.** — If, however, Claudius was by no means a failure as a monarch, his rule had grave defects. More than any emperor before him, he was ruled by his wives and his freedmen. A Cæsar had no difficulty in obtaining valiant generals and experienced provincial governors of good family to serve him, but it was otherwise with secretarial posts at Rome. A noble of lofty lineage would consider these menial, — mere stewardships of a superlatively great property owner; and Claudius — like Tiberius — was obliged to depend upon men of very humble rank to fill them. Being himself of no great strength of character, he allowed the reins of the government at Rome to fall largely into the hands of his freedmen. The result was that Narcissus, Pallas, and other ex-slaves for a while were far more important than the consuls. They were by no means incompetent administrators; but they certainly used their opportunities for self-enrichment. Narcissus accumulated the then enormous fortune of 400,000,000 sesterces (\$16,000,000);<sup>1</sup> Pallas was hardly poorer.

<sup>1</sup> The actual modern purchasing power of such a sum may be set at three to five times this figure.

Mighty was the inward wrath of the haughty nobles of the capital at seeing the power lodged in the hands of creatures who had once been sold in the market along with kine and asses. Yet the servile Senate did not hesitate to heap honors on them; an unblushing attempt was even made to trump up a genealogy for Pallas, tracing his line back to the ancient Arcadian kings. So lofty was this high minister that he once asserted that he never deigned to give an order verbally to *his* slaves, but only communicated by signs or by writing.

The power of these freedmen, however, depended entirely on a master's will; and Claudius's will was particularly controlled by his wives. Twice he was married, twice divorced; then — before he became emperor — he wedded the beautiful yet infamous **Messalina**. Over the good-natured, yielding Emperor she for some years ruled almost absolutely, using her influence to destroy cruelly any nobleman who won her hatred, and at the same time indulging in almost incredible deeds of profligacy and shame. Her weak husband — almost alone of all the world — never realized her iniquities. Her position at court was strengthened by her bearing to Claudius two children, — the boy Britannicus, and the girl Octavia. But the secretary, Narcissus, who had long connived at her intrigues and pun-

ishments, at length began to fear for himself as the next victim. Her ruin came in 48 A.D., when, with bold ostentation, she actually went through a kind of marriage ceremony with one of her lovers, a young nobleman, Silius. Narcissus could now act. He convinced Claudius that Messalina would never have dared this deed had she not intended to deprive the Emperor himself of power and life. Claudius hesitated, but Narcissus, on his own responsibility, ordered the execution. Messalina perished, and Claudius, when told that she was dead, demanded another wine cup, and never spoke of his wife again, nor ever took any measures against Narcissus.

The Emperor, however, could not remain unmarried. After infinite intrigue among the leading freedmen, **Agrippina the Younger**, Claudius's own niece, and the candidate of Pallas for the honor, was preferred. She was a bold, able, ambitious, and withal absolutely unscrupulous woman, not better than Messalina, but gifted with more self-restraint. It took a special decree of the Senate to allow her to marry her uncle.<sup>1</sup> Once fairly wedded, however, she showed herself able to exercise a power hardly wielded by any previous woman in Rome. She openly sat beside Claudius when he received foreign envoys. Her head — by order of the Senate — was

<sup>1</sup> Such unions had been hitherto forbidden by Roman law.

struck on coins. She interfered constantly in public business. All this, nevertheless, could not satisfy her. The heir to the purple was Messalina's son, — the young prince Britannicus. With a hideous skill she contrived to deprive him of his birthright and bring the Empire to her own son by an earlier marriage, — Lucius Domitius.

The first step was to get the pliable Emperor to adopt Domitius as his own son, under the name of **Nero** (50 A.D.). Nero was older than Britannicus. The younger prince was kept in the background, while Nero was thrust into the public eyes and received official honors. He was betrothed to his cousin, Octavia. Officers friendly to Britannicus's claims were displaced. Finally, when Agrippina found Narcissus inclined to work against her, and urging upon Claudius to recognize the rights of his own son, she and her confederate, Pallas, acted boldly. In October, 54 A.D., Claudius was poisoned — according to the usual story — by eating a dish of carefully prepared mushrooms. Narcissus was absent from the court at the moment. Everything had been made ready, and Nero was proclaimed imperator by the Prætorians ere anything could be done for Britannicus.

**7. Nero (54–68 A.D.); the Years of Good Government.** — The crime had been Agrippina's, not

Nero's. He was only seventeen years old, and appears to have been a handsome, talented, and by no means bad-hearted lad, from whom there was much to hope. He was much under the influence of his tutor, Seneca, — a wealthy philosopher and literary magnate, — who professed a high type of Stoicism that has much superficial resemblance to Christianity. Nero was deeply indebted also for his throne to Burrhus, — the Prætorian Præfect, — a bluff, practical, and fairly honest soldier, who could be relied on to use his power for the best. The dull and ungainly Claudius was not lamented. Young Britannicus was ignored. The world believed that, with Seneca and Burrhus to guide him, Nero would prove a princeps equal to Augustus. And as a matter of fact, so for a while events indicated. The first five years of Nero's reign were his famous *Quinquennium*, — a time of "virtuous and able government." Of course the real rulers were Seneca and Burrhus, assisted by the better men of the Senate. The provinces prospered. Abuses were cleared away. Taxes were lightened. Nero was the most popular of emperors.

Yet though the world knew it not, the young Emperor was developing traits which gave great solicitude to his tutors and ministers. In a position of obscurity Nero would have been a mediocre poetaster



and art critic. He was not naturally cruel. He was not more licentious than many a man of his time. But he was keenly alive to æsthetic and artistic influences; the old pagan adoration of "the Beautiful," as totally dis severed from "the Moral," appealed to him, and his preceptors never taught him high standards of righteousness and duty. Under these circumstances it was natural enough that he should indulge in low amours, in magnificent but voluptuous revels, or spend his time idling away at bad poetry, when he might have been learning how to steer the State. Probably as yet he had not realized *how great* was the power lodged in the hands of the princeps, and how to use it for full self-gratification. One trait he had which was not at first obvious, — a keen sense of fear. And cowardly fear, rather than inherent viciousness, dragged him on from crime to crime, until "Nero" has become the synonym for vile tyranny. In 55 A.D. the well-attested rumor spread that the Emperor had destroyed his adoptive brother, Britannicus, by poison.

**8. Nero; the Tyranny.** — The charge was true. In striking down Britannicus Nero had not so much dreaded this helpless lad as his own mother, Agrippina, the woman who had given him the principate. Agrippina had expected to govern the Roman world through her son, the nominal Emperor. She

soon found that Seneca and Burrhus had far more influence over Nero and over affairs of state than herself. There were stormy scenes. The relations of mother and son became strained. Before Agrippina's power had waned, she had caused Narcissus, Britannicus's friend, to be put to death; but now her own chief confederate, Pallas, was disgraced and banished from court. Imprudently she boasted that Britannicus was the true heir. She even hinted she might pull down her ungrateful son by blood, and put her stepson in his place. There is no proof that Nero consulted his two chief ministers as to what he contemplated. It is to be hoped that, as honorable men, they would have warned against the deed. More likely, on his own responsibility, he had the poison bowl passed to the luckless young prince at a great court banquet.

This was the first step. Nor is it needful to trace all the stages of degeneracy in a character not at the outset hopelessly depraved. To tell the truth, it required an unusually steady head not to be turned by the consciousness of the almost illimitable power of an emperor. It was impossible for Burrhus and Seneca to hold their protégé in leading-strings, or to keep his personal folly from interfering in the government. In 59 A.D., after temporary reconciliations, and a clumsy attempt at privy murder which

did not succeed, Nero had his mother openly slain by swordsmen, with only a hollow pretence that she was conspiring against him. Seneca — compromising surely with his conscience — wrote the letter for Nero by which he justified the deed to the Senate. But in 62 A.D. — after his own power at court had been long waning — Burrhus, Seneca's chief supporter, died (poisoned by Nero, ran the rumor), and Seneca himself went into retirement in fear of his life. Already a new power had appeared on the scene, the proverbially beautiful and licentious Poppæa Sabina, who — as unscrupulous as other imperial women — urged on the entangled Emperor to put away Claudius's daughter, the noble Octavia, first to banish her, later to cause her death; after which Poppæa — for some time a mistress — could be proclaimed his wedded consort and "Augusta."

The story of the later foul deeds and conspiracies, — of how Seneca perished, thanks to an abortive plot of his kinsmen; of how, driven mad by fear, Nero passed from crime to crime, sending the dreaded centurion now to this, now ever to another palace of a great noble, with orders for the master thereof to "open his veins" (commit suicide by bleeding), — this is part not of history but of mere court annals. Yet it is worthy of notice that down to

nearly the end the Emperor kept the loyalty fairly well of the legions, of the provinces, and of the city multitude, — thanks largely to his open-handed policy of scattering donatives to the soldiery and presenting free games and festivals to the masses. The staid Roman aristocrats were fearfully scandalized by the sight of Nero, the head of the Empire, appearing personally on the stage as a concert singer; but it made him popular with the thousands, and should be reckoned among the least of his sins.

From one grave charge he is probably free. In 64 A.D. a terrible fire devastated Rome. The city had been carelessly and ill built. The conflagration lasted six days ere it could be checked. About half of the capital had been destroyed. A rumor among the homeless multitude made it that the Emperor had ordered the fire to gratify himself with an exciting spectacle. The evidence for this is insufficient. On the contrary, Nero appears to have done all in reason to check the fire, and afterward to aid the sufferers and rebuild the devastated city. But popular wrath demanded scapegoats, and to satisfy the clamor the adherents of an obscure and hated Jewish sect, the Christians, were arrested and a large number of them burned in the Emperor's gardens, as the alleged authors of the calamity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question of the relations of the early Christians to the Roman government is taken up in Chapter IV, p. 168.

It was high time, by 68 A.D., however, that this evil reign should end. Nero was no longer surrounded by good administrators. The chief minister, Tigellinus, was worse than his master. Misgovernment was beginning to harm the whole Empire. In Gaul the governor, Vindex, began a revolt, but the loyal legions destroyed him. In Spain, however, another governor, Galba, declared himself Emperor, and support soon came to him from every hand. At Rome the Prætorians refused to sustain their tyrant longer. In June, 68 A.D., seeing all was lost, Nero tried to flee the city. The Senate, plucking boldness, declared Galba to be Princeps, and proclaimed Nero an outlaw. He was run to bay at a villa four miles from Rome, and stabbed himself just as his pursuers were about to seize him. He was not the demon sometimes pictured, but he had been absolutely unfitted from the outset to be emperor. With him the old line of the Julii — even with its adoptive branches — had ended. Poison, the executioner's sword, early and sudden death, had cut off all of a great family. If the principate was to continue, it must needs be perpetuated from some less famous stock.

**9. The Anarchy, 68-69 A.D.** — The death of Nero brought a severe testing to the whole fabric of Augustus. Nero's years of misrule, favoritism, extrava-

gance, had depleted the treasury and were beginning to put awry most of the machinery of provincial government. A serious national insurrection existed in Judea; conditions were ripe for another uprising among the Northern Gauls, and the Germans settled west of the Rhine. There was no regular succession to the principate. **Galba**, proclaimed by the Spanish legions, was an aged man, reputed moderate and experienced; but by January, 69 A.D., he had disgusted the Prætorian Guard at Rome by his parsimony and insistence on strict discipline. The guardsmen — quite debauched by Nero's lax control — readily declared for Otho, an "elegant debauchée," a man without conscience or morality, although not lacking in a certain capacity. On the 15th of January, 69 A.D., Galba was murdered by his soldiery, and **Otho**, proclaimed by the troops, was accepted by the cowed senators. But the legions in the provinces were by no means minded to let the Prætorians be the sole emperor-makers. The powerful Rhenish legions promptly declared their chief, the incompetent and proverbially gluttonous **Vitellius**, as Emperor, and directed their march on Italy. And so after nearly a century of peace the Empire was rent by civil war. If Vitellius himself was without capacity, he had skilful lieutenants. A great battle at Cremona in Northern Italy was in his

favor. Otho still had a body of loyal troops, but despairing of the issue, and perhaps tired of a life out of which he had sucked every form of pleasure, he committed suicide.

From April to December (69 A.D.) Vitellius — his rough German legionaries giving the law to the trembling Senate — played the emperor at Rome, but not in the Eastern provinces. Another general, **Vespasian**, leader of the armies in the Orient, had been acclaimed as sovereign by his soldiery, even as Vitellius was entering the capital in triumph. A second fierce and bloody civil war followed. The fighting only ended when the advance leader of Vespasian's army penetrated to Rome itself, forced their way into the city, and destroyed the Vitellians in their last stand inside the fortified barracks of the Prætorians. Vitellius was captured and hewed in pieces by the enraged conquerors, and the imperial city — at least in part of its quarters — endured all the horrors of a sack.

10. **Vespasian (69-79 A.D.).** — This civil war, the "first anarchy," as it has been sometimes called, was a fearful revelation of the power of the army. Now at length, as the ancient historian well says, the soldiers learned that emperors could be made elsewhere than in Rome. Not the high-born lords of the Senate, the millionaire *Equites*, the multi-

tudes of proud "citizens," but a few tens of thousands of ignorant swordsmen, often Germans from the Rhine, or Syrians from the Euphrates, hardly understanding Latin, ignorant of the Græco-Roman culture, gave and took away the authority to control the destinies of seventy millions of men. A stern yet tactful hand alone could control this irresponsible army, which was becoming ever more conscious of its strength. The time had not yet come when military insurrection would be the order of the day; but the need of humoring the army by relaxations of discipline, increase of pay, and frequent donatives, was increasingly evident through the next century; and nothing more illustrates an inherent defect of the Roman society than the inability of the provincials and Italian population to save themselves from being trampled over and disposed of by relatively small armies of professional soldiers.

Yet for the hour the danger passed. Titus Flavius<sup>1</sup> Vespasianus was a man of relatively poor and humble birth who had risen to high command, thanks to his integrity and military capacity. He had been almost ruined once because he fell asleep in the theatre, at a time when Nero had been exhibiting "his divine voice" before a courtly and applauding audience.

<sup>1</sup> Hence this reign and the next two following are often called the time of the "Flavian Cæsars."



But the dangerous revolt of the Jews had forced even the tyrannous Emperor to select a competent general to reduce them, and Vespasian had been chosen. When sovran were being pulled down and set up in the West, his Eastern legions had proclaimed him and fought for him. Fortune gave him the purple, and he kept it till his natural death. In the main he had deserved his good fortune. There was nothing splendid in his policy, but he deliberately, with business thoroughness, went to work to repair the wrecks of Nero's reign and of the anarchy. A serious uprising of the North Gallic and German tribes, headed by *Civilis*, chief of the warlike Batavians, at first menaced the peace of the Empire along the Rhine; but by 71 A.D. the imperial generals had crushed it. Titus — the Emperor's son — soon, as will be seen, stamped out the Jewish revolt. The Roman arms made steady progress in Britain. At Rome, by skilful concessions to the dignity of the Senate, Vespasian restored pleasant relations between the sovran and the nobility, without impairing his own power. A series of magnificent public buildings (e.g. the temple of the Capitol burned in the Civil War, the Flavian Amphitheatre,<sup>1</sup> a new Forum, etc.)

<sup>1</sup> Known usually by its mediæval name, the Colosseum. This vast building could probably seat about 45,000 persons, with standing room for 5000 more on the roof; not 87,000, as some-

added to the splendor of the imperial city. The legions were brought back into discipline. The provincial administration — much disordered now — was reformed. The empty treasury was refilled by strict economy and a better application of the taxes.

Not brilliant achievements these, but things very necessary for the Empire, and it is to Vespasian more than to any other one man that we owe the fact that the world continued with substantial prosperity for about a century more. Nor is it slight praise for him, that with his coming to power, with his love of homely virtues and hatred of shams, life in the upper circles of society — taking its example from the Palatine — became simpler and somewhat more moral; and we hear considerably less of those astounding acts of extravagance, of those proverbially voluptuous banquets and displays so frequent in the earlier Empire.<sup>1</sup>

times estimated. A famous prophecy was current in the Middle Ages:—

“While stands the Colosseum Rome shall stand;  
When falls the Colosseum Rome shall fall;  
And when Rome falls, with her shall fall the world.”

A tribute to the greatness of Rome and of this amphitheatre!

<sup>1</sup> Yet the worldly wisdom of Vespasian must not be exaggerated. Once an inventor offered him a machine for lifting very cheaply certain huge columns for the new temples. The Emperor would

**II. The Jewish War and Destruction of Jerusalem (66-70 A.D.).**—The reign of Vespasian saw the practical end of the Jews as a territorial nation; henceforth they were simply to remain a peculiar race dispersed over the wide earth. The Romans had established their supremacy over Judea in 63 B.C., when Pompeius the Great took Jerusalem and reduced it to tribute. Herod the Great had reigned from 40 B.C. to 4 A.D. as a Roman vassal-king, hated by his subjects for his cruelty and because he was not a true Jew, but rather an Idumean. After his death the bulk of Palestine had been reduced to the status of a Roman province of the minor order, under imperial procurators; although divers princes of the Herodian house preserved small territories, their boundaries frequently shifted. In the main the Romans had treated their uneasy subjects with marked consideration; their religious feelings were honored, *e.g.* Gentiles were carefully excluded from the inner courts of the Temple at Jerusalem, and a Roman soldier who tore up a roll of the "Law" was executed. But nothing could pacify the pride of this small but haughty nation and reconcile it to the Gentile yoke. The question thrust on Jesus, "whether it were law-

not use it, saying, "Suffer me to find livelihood for the poor," *i.e.* by working at the common derricks. The regular argument of short-sighted wiseacres against machinery!

ful to pay tribute to Cæsar?" was one earnestly debated throughout Palestine, with an increasing emphasis upon the negative. In 66 A.D., thanks to some blunders by the incompetent officials sent out by Nero, the popular wrath came to a head. The Roman governor, Gallus, was repulsed with loss from before Jerusalem; the "Zealots," the most radical and fanatical portion of the nation, assumed control of the local government. Moderate men were removed by assassination, and by the end of the year the little Jewish province was prepared to brave all the power of the Roman Empire.

Thanks to its association with Biblical matters, this last stand of the Jews possesses great human interest, an interest increased by the personal narrative we have from Josephus, one of the leaders of the Jewish resistance; but from the standpoint of a Roman, the revolt, though a formidable one, was hardly more important than the similar uprising of Civilis on the Rhine. There never was any doubt of the issue after Vespasian was sent to the East in 67 A.D. with three regular legions and a strong corps of auxiliaries. In 68 A.D. he had reduced Galilee and about all the revolted country in the North, in spite of the desperate resistance of many hill fortresses. In 69 the campaign rested, for Vespasian was busy winning the Empire. In 70 A.D. the new Emperor's eldest son,

Titus, invested Jerusalem. The horrors of the siege, the unavailing attempts to get the Jews to capitulate, the civil strife within the walls, the awful famine, the final storming of the defences, and the plundering and burning of the Temple (70 A.D.) have become proverbial. The case had been hopeless almost from the start, for Jerusalem had not a single ally or hopes of succor. The Jewish nation seemed for the moment blotted out. Thousands of captive insurgents were put to death or sold into slavery. Many, taken to Rome as captives, probably worked to build the Flavian Amphitheatre. Titus returned to Rome to enjoy a splendid triumph, and sculptured upon the arch erected in his honor is still to be seen the seven-branched candlestick snatched from the Holy of Holies of the burning Temple.

12. Titus (reign 79-81 A.D.). — Vespasian died in 79 A.D. "I think I am becoming a god!" he remarked cynically upon his death-bed, referring to the practice of deifying departed emperors. His eldest son, Titus, had already been admitted to a share in his power, and was proclaimed by the Senate and army amid great satisfaction. The new Princeps was a victorious soldier, genial, generous, popular. He was reputed to have declared that "he had lost a day" in which he did not do some kindly deed. The only striking event in his reign was the overwhelming of

the cities of **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum** on the Campanian coast by the sudden awakening of the volcano **Vesuvius** (79 A.D.). This event, perhaps, has given the modern age its best knowledge of ancient civilization, thanks to the uncovering of these buried cities. **Titus** was immensely beloved for the moment. "The delight of the human race," so at least his courtiers called him. Whether he would have kept his popularity through a long reign is somewhat doubtful, but the matter was never tested. After a rule of only two years, he found himself sinking upon an untimely death-bed. He had no son, and Roman sentiment would never have allowed his daughter to receive his power. The principate therefore fell to his younger and less popular brother, **Domitian**.

Sixty-seven years had now elapsed since the death of **Augustus**. His system of actual monarchy under semi-republican forms had been maintained almost intact. Under **Domitian**, however, was to come a change.

**13. Domitian (reign 81-96 A.D.); the Principate changing to Outward Absolutism.** —The new Emperor was another of those unfortunate rulers who incurred a bad name among posterity largely because he failed to conciliate the literary-minded, history-writing aristocracy of the capital. But no plea can

entirely clear him of being a gloomy-minded, timorous, and hence cruel despot of the type of Tiberius rather than of Nero. He was a younger son of Vespasian; his father and elder brother had not unjustly distrusted him, and kept him in the public background. Now stress of circumstances raised him to the principate. Like many an emperor, he began his reign well. He was thirty years old, and seemed past the unsteady years of youth. He affected a complaisant policy towards the Senate. He suppressed the "delators" (the busy prosecutors of deeds or mere words against the Emperor), saying wisely of this worthless tribe, "The princeps who does not suppress them encourages them." The provincial administration was again overhauled for its betterment. A series of useful laws for the ordering and policing of the capital were put in force. But Domitian had all the traits and ambitions of an absolute sovrän, and it took only a little to make him give the pretended share of the Senate in the government a blow from which it never recovered. He rapidly became first unpopular, then cruel, finally hated, and the victim of the dagger.

Probably the chief adverse influence was his want of military success. His father and brother had been highly fortunate generals. He himself had less skill or more doughty enemies. In 83 A.D. he

became engaged with a German tribe, the Chatti, along the Rhine, and won only very doubtful victories. Too proud to confess at Rome his failure, he is alleged to have celebrated a sham triumph and to have assumed the proud name of Germanicus, although the facts about his alleged victories were presently rumored about. Again he found a formidable foe along the Danube in the *Dacians*,<sup>1</sup> and being unable to subdue them, was actually compelled to a humiliation no Roman leader had undergone before. To secure peace he bestowed on the enemy "presents," which a hostile critic could readily describe as "tribute." After the close of the Dacian war (90 A.D.) he gave way to a career of cruelty and oppression which only ended with his death.

But Domitian did more than give free scope again to the delators, thus causing many a noble Roman to perish for alleged conspiracy against his power. He habitually acted in defiance of the Senate, and with deliberate attempt to humiliate it. Hitherto, though as an extraordinary measure, several emperors had assumed the title of *Censor*, and in virtue of that old Republican office had removed unworthy senators and installed new ones, but they had always laid down this office at the end of a set period. The Senate had consisted still of ex-office-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 106 for the nature of this powerful enemy and their fate.



holders, not of the Princeps's direct appointees, and such being the case, the body was able to preserve a certain spirit of independence as against him. But it was reserved for Domitian to assume the office of **Censor for life**. By virtue of this authority he was able to remove and appoint senators at his own sweet will, and the whole body became completely dependent upon him. It was vain to talk of a "joint rule" when any senator who displeased the sovran could be summarily struck from the official "album." Hereafter, although one meets with the Senate for centuries yet, it was only an emasculated body, actually helpless before the whim of the avowed monarch.<sup>1</sup>

Again Domitian in 84 A.D. caused himself to be voted into the consulship for ten years, as if he intended to add that famous magistracy to his attributes; he summoned *Equites* to his private state council (*concilium*) to show his small regard for senators; he allowed his officials to address him as *Dominus et Deus* (Lord and Divinity), as if he were an Oriental despot; he went abroad habitually in purple robes of triumph, and with a pomp and circumstance carefully shunned by the less pretentious "first citizens" of the earlier principate.

<sup>1</sup> Of course ex-magistrates still became senators, save when the Emperor directly intervened.

To make certain of the support of the army, which he had failed to lead to victory, and which must be his stay against the sullen Senate, he increased the pay by one-third. Perhaps a just measure; but again it was a step looking to that close alliance of imperator and soldiery on which the later Empire depended.

It was a dreary epoch, — the last decade of Domitian. Agricola, the conqueror of North Britain, had been summoned home in 85 A.D. — it is alleged through the jealousy of Domitian — just as he was about to conquer Caledonia (modern Scotland). In 93 A.D. the able general died, — not without rumors of poisoning by a despised master. Less doubtful were other crimes fastened upon the despot, the most illustrious victim being, perhaps, Flavius Clemens, his cousin, and probable heir to the Empire.<sup>1</sup> Any man whose riches gave a chance for the harpies of the imperial household was liable to some accusation. The Emperor himself — suspicious, hated, and hating — was becoming as cruel as Nero, without Nero's splendor and prodigality, which had charmed the mob. The financial necessities of the treasury led Domitian to join even with the delators in attacking perfectly harmless men for the division of their goods betwixt accuser and the *Fiscus*.

<sup>1</sup> There has been some attempt made to show that Clemens perished because he was a Christian.

At length those closest to the Emperor felt alarmed for their own safety. His wife was privy to a conspiracy which several imperial freedmen shared. In September, 96 A.D., Domitian died much as Marat, the famous French Revolutionist, died, — from a blow of a dagger wielded by a pretended revealer of a plot, who demanded a private interview, then stabbed his victim. There were few to mourn the dead man. He was indeed somewhat popular in the army, which he had enriched; but in the Senate there was an indecent haste to “condemn his memory,” to order the tearing down of his statues, and the erasure of his name from every public monument and document, while his body was given a pauper’s burial.

14. **Nerva (96–98 A.D.); the Beginning of the “Good Emperors.”** — The conspirators had already planned for the next reign. Domitian left no son, and the Senate readily acquiesced in the choice of **Marcus Nerva**, an aged nobleman of experience and culture. He was himself of the old senatorial class, and imbued with its prejudices. He promptly took a solemn oath never to put a senator to death, and he consulted the Senate deferentially on all occasions. His rule was studiously moderate. It was complained that he was *too* lenient, in refraining from punishing the creatures of Domitian; but he lacked the energy and prestige to control the army, and accordingly took one of

the wisest steps ever made by a Roman ruler, — he adopted as his son and colleague in power, Marcus Ulpius Trajanus, perhaps the ablest and best general and administrator to be found in the whole imperial line. The adoption had only been ratified a few months when Nerva died (January, 98 A.D.).

Nerva was the first of the so-called "Five Good Emperors," and his reign brought in an era of great seeming prosperity. For several reigns following, the princeps was to be chosen not by hereditary right (these emperors, all but the last, died without sons), nor by arbitrary election on the part of the people or of the army, but through each ruler's making painful choice of an experienced coadjutor, then adopting that person, and bequeathing to him the government. It is worth noticing that this system worked, on the whole, admirably until there came a princeps who could not resist the temptation to leave the throne to his eldest son. The result then was to give the Empire its first really bad ruler after Domitian.

**15. Trajan (98–117 A.D.).** — The reign of Trajan is worthy of extended notice, yet, thanks to the failure of our literary remains, it is hard to trace a satisfactory outline. He was a native, not of Italy, but of Italica, a Roman colony-town of Southern Spain, and with him the provinces of the Empire to a certain extent

came to their own. He was a trained soldier, and beloved by the army, which he held down with a firm but just discipline. He was now in the prime of life, and his reign marks an epoch of internal regeneration and foreign conquest which that of no later emperor could rival. "May you be fortunate as Trajan!" was a regular acclamation to later Cæsars upon their assuming power.

The new Princeps was not a soldier merely. Not a man of letters himself, he understood the worth of true culture, and encouraged literature and the arts. His was the "Silver Age" of Latin literature, the age of the historian, Tacitus, and of the genial letter-writer, Pliny the Younger, — authors who hail him as the "restorer of freedom" after the tyranny of Domitian. He posed again as the "first citizen," not as the "master." His freedmen were kept in due bounds, and did not offend by their insolence. The Senate was again humored by being allowed to debate and advise on all matters, although Trajan did not repudiate actually many of the encroachments on its authority taken by Domitian. Again the so-called "free towns" in the provinces and in the whole of Italy had been falling under the evils of local misgovernment. Trajan took a step towards centralizing imperial authority by sending to divers communities *curators*, — his own officers clothed with a power to

meddle in local affairs, a measure which, while useful for the moment, nevertheless hinted towards the ending of local freedom.

The financial administration of the Empire was strict and successful; and thanks to his conquests, Trajan was able to distribute large donatives among the army and populace at Rome, which made his rule highly popular. In the provinces we find traces of the rule of a monarch kindly, intelligent, very anxious to justify his power by the good government he affords mankind. Extortionate proconsuls were tried before the Senate, and forced to disgorge. The "Senatorial" provinces seem in the main to have been much worse governed than those directly under the care of the Cæsar. In Trajan's day this was the case of Bithynia, which was in such evil state that the Senate resigned the rule of it temporarily, and Trajan sent as a special "legate" his personal friend, the author, Pliny. The correspondence between this high commissioner and the Emperor has been preserved to us, and is among the most interesting pieces we have of Latin literature. One finds that the provincial towns of Bithynia have made ill use of the relative freedom allowed them by the government: there are public buildings falling to decay; and charges of misappropriation, embezzlement, improper city debts, etc., are flying everywhere.

The correspondence is striking in showing Trajan's excellent judgment, common sense, and unwillingness to stand needlessly on his imperial dignity, although he shows the traditional governmental attitude against anything likely to foster political unrest when he warns Pliny not to let the inhabitants of Nicomedia organize a fire company, since "societies, whatever name they bear, are sure to become political associations."

The nineteen years of Trajan's reign, in short, were a period of great internal prosperity, and of relative liberty for the individual; yet they were still more notable for the Emperor's conquests over the redoubtable Dacians and Parthians.

**16. The Dacian and Parthian Wars.** — Claudius had violated the precept of Augustus against extending the Empire, by annexing Britain; Trajan went further, and added a great province north of the Danube. Yet this conquest was made not from bloodthirsty seeking of military glory. As early as the reign of Augustus the formidable **Dacians**, a people probably of Thracian origin, inhabiting what is to-day Hungary and Roumania, had crossed the Danube and plundered the allies of Rome. They had been easily repulsed by the imperial generals; but during the first century A.D. their power had been consolidating. There was grave danger that a

warlike, semi-civilized, non-Roman power would arise beyond the Danube, and become a standing menace to the Empire. Domitian had been obliged to buy, rather than to gain by conquest, a peace. Decebalus, the Dacian king, had not merely demanded money, but that Romans send him artists and mechanics to teach his people the works of peace. With his rear covered by the fastnesses of the Carpathian Mountains, the rich plains of modern Hungary and the mineral wealth of the hills gave Decebalus all the elements of a really aggressive kingdom.

Our accounts of the campaigns of Trajan against Decebalus and his people are painfully scanty. Better than the dry epitomizers is the pictorial information given us upon the great column reared by the conqueror at Rome, on which are portrayed with marvellous clearness the leading incidents of the war. Probably in these campaigns Roman military art was at its very best. The skill of the Emperor's engineers triumphed over all natural obstacles; roads were cut in the rock along precipitous ledges above the Danube; bridges of boats were laid upon the majestic river; the Roman leader, at length, in the second campaign, actually threw across the Danube a magnificent bridge of stone: "twenty piers, with arches 60 feet in breadth and 150 feet high, not



reckoning foundations." It was the masterpiece of the imperial engineer, Apollodorus, and perhaps the greatest feat of its kind until decidedly modern times.

In the first campaign (101-102 A.D.) Decebalus was pressed hard, sued for peace, razed his forts, and did homage to the victor. But the treaty was quickly broken. In the second campaign there was no truce with a wily and desperate foe. This campaign (104-106 A.D.) was marked with a stubborn resistance and some Roman reverses; but no barbarian valor could block the on-working of the attacking military machine controlled by a master hand. In 106 A.D. Decebalus made a last rally, then slew himself. The conquest was complete. To prevent a new enemy from seizing the invaded country, and probably also to make use of its valuable mines, Trajan erected Dacia into a new province. Colonists soon swarmed in. Cities rose and for a time flourished. Dacia was indeed the first province (saving Germany) to be lost; but the imprint of the Roman dominion still remains with the inhabitants. To-day the language of modern Roumania shows a surprising affinity with the Latin.

In honor of his conquests Trajan outvied earlier conquerors by the splendor of his triumph at Rome and by his exhibition of games, — one hundred and

twenty-three days long, — wherein eleven thousand wild animals slaughtered ten thousand gladiators joined in mortal combat. With such a butchery the “best of princes” thought needful to humor his subjects.

But his ambition for military glory had not been satisfied. The Parthian kingdom, a great monarchy with all the strength and weakness of a regular Oriental despotism, was ever stirring up trouble for Rome along the Euphrates, and particularly was meddling with Armenia, a vassal kingdom of the Empire. Perhaps with an ambition to rival Alexander the Great, Trajan went to Antioch in 114 A.D., summoned his devoted legions, and began a series of campaigns against Chosroes the Parthian. The first attack cleared the enemy from Armenia. In 116 A.D. the bulk of the Parthian empire seemed conquered. Ctesiphon, the capital, was taken. Trajan actually descended the Euphrates to the Erythræan Sea (Persian Gulf). He undertook to organize the Tiro-Euphrates valley into Roman provinces also, but he speedily learned that to overrun the East was not to conquer it. Revolts broke out everywhere, and his health was failing. He had to set out for Italy, intending to return and castigate the insurgents, but died at Selinus, in Cilicia, in 117 A.D.

All in all, he may be reckoned the best of the rulers of the Empire following Augustus.

**17. Hadrian (reign 117-138 A.D.); his Personality.** — Not the least of the good deeds of Trajan was that he left as his successor Ælius Hadrianus. He was a younger kinsman of Trajan, had been educated by him, and intrusted with divers places of trust and opportunity, in which he proved his worth. In 98 A.D. he had married the Emperor's grandniece, a match brought about by the Empress Plotina, who appears to have done everything to advance the young man's interests. From this time on it had become increasingly plain that Trajan intended him for his successor, although when the great warrior suddenly died it is not quite certain that Hadrian had been formally adopted as his heir. The army, however, accepted him readily enough, and the Senate, as usual, acquiesced.

The new Princeps was a Solomon after the conquering David. He assuredly lacked the moderation, poise, and unvarying good sense of his predecessor, but he was far more a man of culture, ideas, and ideals. He was, in short, rather a Hellene in spirit than a Roman. Not merely was he anxious to govern well, but he was anxious to recognize the good in the faiths and customs of every part of his huge Empire. Sculpture, architecture, philosophy found in him a

munificent and truly intelligent patron, and it was not mere flattery when his intimates called him also a poet.<sup>1</sup>

His reign, bereft of any notable external event, was on the whole marked by corresponding quiet within. The Jews, to be sure, — a remnant driven from Jerusalem, but not from Palestine, and goaded to fury by being forbidden to practise their rite of circumcision, — rose in despairing revolt in 131 A.D., and were not crushed until 136 A.D., by which time their unfortunate country had been reduced almost to a desert. This was the only important disturbance, and the energetic, intelligent Princeps was left to devote almost all his energies to the substantial betterment of the Empire.

**18. Hadrian's Works of Peace.** — The age of Hadrian was the culmination of the Roman system. Never again were peace and prosperity so general, or the government so devoted to promoting the weal of

<sup>1</sup> Shortly before his death he composed these lines, justly famous: —

Soul of mine, pretty one, flitting one,  
Guest and partner of my clay,  
Whither wilt thou hie away,  
Pallid one, rigid one, naked one, —  
Never to play again, never to play?"

[*Merivale, translator.*]

Perhaps these verses are the best ever composed by an imperial or royal bard!

the governed. After him the prosperity lived on for some decades, but it was slowly on the wane. Unfortunately, deeds of peace are less easy to summarize than deeds of war. It is possible to give merely an idea of Hadrian's noble activity.

I. The new provinces across the Euphrates which Trajan had endeavored to organize out of the defeated Parthian kingdom were obviously difficult to defend and costly to keep in obedience. Hadrian had the moral courage to evacuate them, despite the criticism of the short-sighted. He retained, however, Dacia, and Arabia Petræa, the country directly south of Palestine, which had been conquered by the generals of Trajan.

II. The Roman law, largely existing in the form of judges' statements, "prætors' edicts," was without system, contradictory, and open to much individual caprice in administration. A famous jurist, *Salvius Julianus*, was employed by Hadrian to put these confused decisions into a well-ordered "*Perpetual Edict*" (put in force 131 A.D.) which later judges must follow, a great step towards the complete codification of the whole law of the Empire.

III. The reign of imperial freedmen came to an end. By Hadrian's time *Equites* and senators had learned that it was not menial to perform the secretarial duties needed by an emperor. A regular civil

service was organized. Only *Equites* were eligible for the important posts in the imperial household. The Emperor's privy council also — hitherto a very informal body — was regularly organized, of senators and *Equites*, influential men, chosen as *consilarii Augusti* at a good salary. This was another step, however, towards establishing an open monarchy. A sovran needs a formal privy council, where a mere "first citizen" does not.

IV. Italy had hitherto been practically exempt from imperial interference, although Trajan had begun a policy of meddling. Now Hadrian brought her halfway to the level of the provinces by appointing four judges of consular rank to take over much of the judicial duty hitherto very poorly discharged by the local magistrates.<sup>1</sup> This step was also a blow to the Senate, which had considered the supervision of Italy its peculiar care.

V. The humanity of the Emperor and his advisers is shown in his legislation touching slavery. Hereafter no master could kill an offending slave; he must be delivered to a magistrate. A matron who ill-treated her maids suffered five years' banishment. No slave was to be sold for immoral purposes or for

<sup>1</sup> The process of degrading Italy from her privileged position goes on fairly steadily from this time, until by about 300 A.D. there was little to distinguish her from the other provinces.

fighting as a gladiator. These enactments flew in the face of the old Roman sentiment as to the absolute power of the master over his "speaking cattle," but they show the development of a kindly and humane philosophy, even before rulers began to be softened by Christianity.

VI. On the frontiers, though there were no great wars, a vast work was done in reorganizing the army and adapting its tactics to the new barbarian enemies it was likely to encounter. The old open method of manœuvring the legions was gradually abandoned for tactics more like those of the phalanx. Along the Danube and in Dacia, along the Rhine, and especially in the lands held by the Empire near the angle difficult to defend, formed between the Rhine and the Danube, a great series of fortified camps, castles, and palisades made invasion almost impossible; while in Britain "Hadrian's Wall," a still more elaborate and formidable structure, closed the province by a solid barrier from the Tyne to the Solway against raids by the northern Caledonians.

VII. But what did most to enhance Hadrian's prestige was the series of visits he paid to every part of his Empire. From 118 to 134 A.D. he spent very little time in Rome. Secure in the fidelity of his officers at the capital, he is found almost continuously

travelling, now to Dacia, now Gaul, now Britain. Again it is Africa, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and twice Athens and Greece, the country he loved the best. In 131 A.D. he seems to have visited Syria, then Egypt. In 134 A.D., feeling his health giving way, he returned to Italy and spent his last years in his magnificent villa at Tibur, near the capital.

These visits were not mere tours of investigation. The Emperor scattered benefactions wherever he went. On the frontiers he built fortresses and disciplined the legions; in the interior his bounty built baths, aqueducts, public basilicas, highways. Local abuses were corrected, local liberties sometimes enlarged. In Athens the Hellenizing Emperor delighted to linger. He mingled with the savants and philosophers of that still famous university city, and showered on her so many donations that a whole new quarter, gratefully called "The City of Hadrian," arose outside the old town. To-day every visitor to Athens sees beneath the shadow of the ancient Acropolis the towering Corinthian columns of the notable Temple of Olympian Zeus, built in its present form by Hadrian.

This is the merest summary of the great reign. In his later days the Emperor became morose and suspicious. He is charged with putting to death several eminent men without sufficient cause. And



again we find a princeps ending his reign without a son to come after him. Hadrian tried to provide an heir by adopting a certain Lucius Verus and bestowing on him the name of "Cæsar," — a designation which was coming to mean "emperor-presumptive." But Verus himself died in 138 A.D., leaving his "father" still living. Hadrian was declining fast. He chose again to adopt Titus Antoninus, an experienced and blameless noble of high rank, and required that he in turn adopt his own nephew, a promising younger noble, Marcus Verus, and also adopt the young son of the late Lucius Verus. The succession had thus been provided for. The Empire was at peace and in great prosperity, when Hadrian, the most brilliant of the Emperors, died of dropsy at Baia in July, 138 A.D.

**19. The City Life under the Empire.** — The age of Hadrian probably saw the greatest development of a characteristic phase of the imperial policy — the fostering of cities and city life. Contrary to general belief, there was much liberty under the principate, — not at Rome, where the noblemen of proud ancestry were likely to become dangerous conspirators, but for the dwellers in the innumerable cities, great and small, that dotted the map of the Empire. The Græco-Roman civilization was primarily an urban civilization, and wherever the eagles

of the legions went there went town life and town organization also. In the East Greeks and Semites had been city builders long before the coming of the Italians; in the West, in Spain, Gaul, Britain, and along the Danube the Romans deliberately founded cities, settling towns themselves and forcing into them the semi-barbarous natives. Thus Gaul and Spain — once countries of scattered tribes with mere strongholds and villages — became almost a series of adjacent municipalities created by the conquerors. In the one province of Bætica (Southern Spain) we know there were one hundred and seventy-five corporate towns, with varying degrees of liberty and privilege, but all with an active civic life. Some of these towns are Roman "colonies," their citizens boasting the same high privileges of the dwellers in Rome; some are "free towns," exempt from tribute, making their own laws, and exempt from having soldiers quartered upon them; some, again, are "tributary towns," liable to the taxation and interference of the provincial governor, but still with their own magistrates and council for local administration. A regular favor by the emperors (a favor often granted by Hadrian) was to raise a tributary town to a free town or colony, *i.e.* to bestow a local charter of privileges and liberties; and as dwellers in these communities possessing

more or less local freedom, one must imagine a large fraction of the provincials to have dwelt.

The government of these municipalities was in the main an imitation of that of the city of Rome before the coming of the Empire. The citizen-body chose two *duumvirs* (chief magistrates in place of the Roman consuls) along with *ediles* (commissioners of public works) and *quæstors* (finance officers). The local Senate, usually numbering one hundred, was composed of retired magistrates, now holding seats in the Council for life;<sup>1</sup> and it would ape with its solemn deliberations and claims to importance the more august Senate at Rome. Once in five years, again, two "*quinquennales*" — imitations of the old Roman censors — revised the Senate list, and reformed the city revenues, building contracts, etc.

There was no lack of bustling political life. The masses had votes, and had to be solicited by would-be magistrates with promises of gladiatorial games, public buildings, or of downright distributions of money (so much per head to each citizen, according to rank) upon assuming office. Political canvassing was fierce. On the walls of Pompeii were found numerous inscriptions begging votes for this or

<sup>1</sup> The members in the local Senates were usually called indifferently *decurions* (a kind of patrician class, as opposed to the local plebs), or *curiales* (i.e. people with seats in the *curia*, — the Senate House).

that candidate as a "worthy man," and favorable to some local interest. With the petty office went the purple robe, the curule chair, the lictors, — all the pomp and state of a great Roman magistracy. So desirable was this half tinsel that not merely was no salary paid the magistrate, but a regular gift to the community was a legal part of every office. A formal law forbade a candidate to promise great public benefactions to the voters, and then after election to fail to carry them out.

Nor was a less selfish feeling of civic pride and public obligation lacking. We find repeated instances of great donations and bequests to one's native city. A new temple, even a new circuit of walls, an endowed rhetoric school, a fund for an annual feast or series of games to the citizens, — these were some of the ways in which local magnates dispensed their wealth, and felt rewarded if a statue stood in the local forum commending their virtues and munificence.

There was a darker side surely. Much "generosity" was mere ostentation, or seeking for the vulgar praise of men. Many a "benefactor" paid for his own statue and laudatory inscription. Yet much of this public spirit was beyond doubt genuine. The duty of the imperial government to foster and not to oppress, the duty of the favored individual to

repay the community for the conditions which made his prosperity possible, was more clearly recognized in the first and second centuries A.D. than in perhaps any succeeding age until the twentieth.

Another task was wrought by the cities and their life, — the Romanizing of the West. In the East, where the cities antedated the Roman conquest, Greek and Oriental speech and modes of thought lived on; in the West every urban community was a centre of civilization among the rude Gaul or Briton or Spaniard. Thanks to the Latinized cities, the old Celtic barbarism wanes rapidly. Latin becomes the speech of at least all the upper classes, proper names are Latinized, the rhetoric schools of Gaul become famous, and the process goes on until no province yielded in loyalty to the imperial principle to Gaul. "Gallo-Roman" — more genuinely "Roman" than the dwellers in Italy — is the name writers on the history of the later Empire and the early Middle Ages give to the dwellers in the land of Vercingetorix.

The age of Hadrian saw this city civilization in full flower and performing its beneficent work of civilizing and unifying the Empire. After him at length came a change. The prosperity slowly waned. The government was in increasing dangers and less able to foster, while the individual had less

to give, and clung covetously to what he had the good fortune to keep.

**20. Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D.).** — Antoninus Pius,<sup>1</sup> whose name has sometimes been transferred to this whole age, until "the age of the Antonines" has become the synonym for peace and good government, ruled twenty-three years. Thanks to the direful gaps in our historical literature, we can hardly say more of his reign than that he continued in the good traditions of Trajan and Hadrian, and that under him the Empire still seemed to prosper. A few clashes there seem to have been with uneasy tribes near Dacia, a disturbance among the Moors of North Africa, an uprising in Britain, but no really serious war. The Emperor kept the machinery of government working in the manner prescribed by his able predecessors, and the machinery worked well. He himself — no traveller like Hadrian — spent his days in Italy, either at Rome or at his favorite country seat of Lorium in Etruria. We have pleasant personal glimpses of the simple and unostentatious life of the virtuous Emperor and of his family. The Princeps was moderate, affable, tender-hearted.

<sup>1</sup> The name "Pius" seems to have been bestowed from the "piety" with which he defended the memory of his "father," Hadrian, against whom the Senate murmured on account of the capricious severity of his later years.

The Senate — treated with great respect — seemed a contented partner in the State. There were only trifling legal and administrative changes. Surely a halcyon reign, with the evil days of Nero far behind! But unfortunately there is reason to believe that, beneath this outward calm and felicity, forces unchecked were making for decay in the army, the government, and in society.

**21. Marcus Aurelius (reign 161–180 A.D.); his Personality.** — Antoninus Pius in his turn left an adopted “son” and successor, Marcus Aurelius, one of the most remarkable figures in ancient history. It is greatly to the glory of the Roman Empire that such a man could wear the purple for nineteen years. Marcus was of patrician ancestry, and nothing showed the discernment of Hadrian better than the fact that he obliged Antoninus to adopt this most promising youth at eighteen, and train him up as heir-presumptive. Antoninus gave Marcus his daughter Faustina in marriage, and in the latter part of his reign allowed him a very considerable share in the government.

Marcus was, however, not a mere child of the purple, even in the better sense of the term. Early in his youth he had adopted the austere practices of the Stoic philosophy, with its contempt for worldly condition and greatness. Barely was his mother — we are told — able to induce him to cease sleeping

on the bare ground and to use a bed upon which were stretched sheepskins. But the new Emperor was not a half ascetic only. Deliberately he undertook to live the life of the duty-loving and duty-doing philosopher even upon the throne. During the days of his preparation under Antoninus we find him indefatigable in the study of rhetoric and philosophy. His correspondence with his old friend and preceptor, the rhetorician Fronto, shows him a man of warm heart, of intelligent and kindly instinct. There is something extremely human in the way this pagan and heir of the imperators writes from his country seat at Lorium on one occasion. Speaking of the health of his infant daughters, he says: "The weather is bad, and I am ill at ease; but when my little girls are well, it seems that my own pains are of slight moment, and the weather is quite fair."

Very noble is the book he has passed to posterity, his *Meditations*, — a classic in philosophical literature.<sup>1</sup> In it the master of the legions speaks like another Ecclesiastes on the vanity of earthly ambition and greatness. Despite a certain tone of pessimism, the ideal for moral conduct is everywhere bracing and noble. He knows the world is

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of note that Marcus wrote this book in Greek, a proof of how Hellenism was again pervading the nominally Latin empire.



very evil, and is resolved to make the best of it. "Begin in the morning by saying to thyself, 'I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial;'" but later he adds not to be discouraged, for "it is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself; for nowhere either with more quiet or more freedom from troubles does a man retire than into his own soul." The man, in short, who enjoys perfect self-mastery, who can take outward circumstance at its true worth, is realizing the best, be he outwardly slave or emperor. A pagan and incomplete doctrine; but Marcus wrote before Christianity had risen from the condition of an obscure and forbidden sect.

Such a man, with a belief that sovereignty was but another name for supreme opportunity for service, ought, if any ruler, to have made the world happy. Unfortunately, his reign was a troubled one; evils not of his making he had to contend with; certain other evils he perhaps accentuated by blunders, though these blunders do credit to his goodness of heart.

One blunder he committed at the outset. Along with Marcus, Antoninus had adopted young Lucius Verus,<sup>1</sup> and reared him as Marcus's younger brother. But Antoninus had not bestowed on Verus any

<sup>1</sup> Son of that Ælius Verus who, after adoption by Hadrian, died before his "father."

particular power or favor. The principate fell to Marcus alone. Nevertheless, impelled by a mistaken sense of obligation, Marcus at once caused all the imperial authority to be granted to Verus, as his colleague and equal, and for the first time Rome saw two emperors on a par in formal authority. A premium would have been set on civil strife, had not Verus's actual vices come as a palliative. The second Emperor was a man of coarse fibre, a sybarite, and a sluggard. He was too engrossed in his own ignoble pleasures to be jealous when his "brother" kept almost entire charge of the government. In 169 he died, and probably his passing was for the vast good of the Empire. Henceforth Marcus reigned alone, and faced manfully, if not wholly prosperously, the gathering tempests.

**22. Marcus Aurelius; his Wars and Perils.**—It is one of the ironies of history that the reign of this most peace-loving Emperor should have been one of war and tumult. The period was one of public distress, but it is only possible to trace certain lines of confusion.

I. At the very outset of the reign violent floods of the Tiber spread ruin through the environs of Rome. This, however, was a mere local calamity, but an earnest of worse to follow.

II. There was a mutiny of the legions in Britain,

happily quelled by the firmness of the general in that province.

III. Along the Euphrates the Parthians — forgetful of the chastening administered by Trajan — took the offensive. In 162 A.D. their king, Vologeses, seized Armenia, and defeated a Roman army. All the Roman East seemed open to attack. Marcus hastily hurried the Western legions hither, and found in Avidius Cassius a general worthy of the old Roman traditions. The Parthian onslaught was flung back; then the imperial armies swept down the Tigro-Euphrates valley. Ctesiphon, the Parthian capital, was taken. The proud barbarian king was reduced to sue for peace (165 A.D.), and to buy it by ceding a broad strip in Mesopotamia. For the moment this seemed like a great success.

IV. In the train of the Parthian war came a terrible affliction. A frightful pestilence — one of those periodic plagues that still scourge all Asia — was brought back from the East by the returning soldiers. The stories of the mortality in Rome, the dead removed by cartloads, the widespread panic, and belief that the end of the world was near, sound like the tales of the famous "Black Death" in the fourteenth century, or the "Great Plague" in London in the seventeenth. An appreciable pro-

portion of the whole population of the Empire seems to have perished. Above all, great inroads were to be made in the army at a time when the legions were to be sorely needed.

V. War was breaking out on the Danube frontier, war of the most dangerous kind. It is hard to discern what it was just then that put the Germanic tribes of the north in motion. In 167 A.D. a congeries of warlike tribes—usually summed up under the names of Marcomanni and Quadi—undertook to force the Danube barriers and to penetrate into the Balkan peninsula and Italy. Many of the frontier fortress towns beat off their attacks, but the horde rolled onward, slipped through the mountain passes at the head of the Adriatic, and besieged the great city of Aquileia in Northern Italy. The army was disorganized, the danger even to Rome herself great. In 167 and 168 Marcus was busy with the legions, gradually thrusting these very formidable tribesmen from the Empire. By 169 the worst danger seemed over, although the enemy were far from beaten to their knees.

VI. In 175 A.D. to foreign war were added the perils of internal insurrection. Avidius Cassius, conqueror of the Parthians, was seduced by ambition to declare himself Emperor in Syria. In a letter of his preserved he charged Marcus, though “a very

worthy man," with being an inefficient emperor, and not practical or energetic in the crisis. Luckily, his own attempt soon ended. His soldiers refused to follow him, and slew him. Marcus mercifully refrained from punishing the dead man's sons; yet the revolt was another strain on the Empire, so tested already.

VII. Some years of respite followed the fall of the pretender. Marcus was able to visit the East and play the part of the charitable benefactor at Alexandria, Smyrna, and Athens. At Athens he even endowed some professors' chairs to testify the obligations of the State to learning. There was an opportunity for beneficent legislation and for refilling the depleted treasury; yet the peace-loving Emperor was not allowed to rest. By 178 A.D. he was again on the Danube, striving to curb the restless barbarians. He was rewarded with victories. It is said that he was on the point of reducing the enemy completely and annexing their lands, when death overtook him. Worn out by the fatigues of the campaign, he died at Vindobona (Vienna) in March, 180 A.D. So passed the noblest personality, though not the most successful emperor, in the long line of the Cæsars.

His unworthy son, Commodus, made haste to conclude a peace with the enemy his father had almost

vanquished, and hurried away from the rude camp to the delights of the capital.

The days of quiet and prosperity for the Empire were ending. The *Pax Romana* had been rudely broken. The long twilight was at hand.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WEAKENING OF THE EMPIRE

**I. Commodus (reign 180-192 A.D.); his Stagnant Reign.** — Marcus Aurelius, unlike his predecessors, had possessed a large family. Instead of adopting the ablest man in the Empire as his heir, he left the purple to Commodus, his eldest son, a youth of scarce twenty, carefully educated, but already showing unpromising traits. Not at first wholly depraved, he speedily developed a bloodthirstiness and licentiousness which made his court little better than Nero's. Nero at least had tried to be a stage singer; Commodus gloried in being a gladiator in the arena, slaying from safe vantage thousands of wild beasts. But since he was too idle to pay much heed to the provinces, his reign was without great disasters. Statesmen trained by his father sometimes ruled for him; a succession of favorites — Perennis, Cleander (an ex-slave from Phrygia), and Eclectus — acted as all-powerful prime ministers. After showing their strength in the preceding reign, the northern tribes kept relatively quiet. By 192 A.D. the tyrant had

run his course. Members of the imperial household, fearing for themselves, accomplished his assassination. The conspirators made haste to induce the guard and the Senate to proclaim Pertinax, an experienced soldier and senator. It seemed as if the crisis was safely over. It had in fact hardly begun.

2. **Pertinax (193 A.D.) ; Didius Julianus (193 A.D.) ; the Empire put up for Sale.** — Pertinax was capable, humane, honest. He began the disagreeable task of repairing the harm done the administration by the lax years of Commodus. Unfortunately, he was not popular with the army. Especially the Prætorian Guard (humored and enriched by the late ruler) was angered at his untactful attempt to restore strict discipline. Three months after the fall of Commodus the mutinous soldiery forced the palace and slew the Emperor, carrying his head in triumph to their camp.

Eighty-seven days only had Pertinax reigned, and now the demoralized palace guard was to add to the crime of murder the crime of putting the Empire up at auction. Great was the power of money under the Empire, but never before had the reign of "King Lucre" been so unblushingly recognized. It had been long since usual for a new emperor to purchase the good-will of the army by a *donativum*, — a gift of so much money per man. The venal Prætorians now deliberately undertook to convey the Empire to



the magnate promising the largest bounty. Pertinax's own father-in-law, Sulpicianus, and a wealthy senator, **Didius Julianus**, openly bid against one another. The former was in the camp of the guard; the latter was stationed on the wall above the soldiers. Messengers passed between the two rivals, announcing, "He offers so much; how much will you give?" Finally, Julianus bid 25,000 sesterces per man (about \$1000). Sulpicianus dared not match him. The soldiers forced the successful bidder to swear not to harm his rival (lest such competitions be discouraged in the future). The Prætorians then took their mock-emperor to the Senate House. The senators, in terror of the thronging soldiers, made haste to recognize him with all kinds of lip service; but it was impossible really to convey the power in this way. The senators and city populace might mutter helplessly, but the generals and legions on the frontiers were at least ready themselves to have a hand in the transfer of the Empire — if it was to be transferred.

The scenes which followed were much like those after the fall of Nero. Three generals, Albinus in Britain, Septimius Severus by the Danube, Pescennius Niger in Syria, — all declared themselves sovereigns. Severus, the ablest and nearest of the three, with a formidable and devoted army, promptly put his troops

in motion. It was vain for Julianus to levy gladiators as soldiers, and impress sailors from the fleet to eke out the slender numbers of the Prætorians. Outside the guard itself there was next to no loyalty to this incapable emperor-by-purchase. Severus's legions advanced rapidly into Italy. It was springtime; the roads were good; no natural obstacle hindered. In despair Julianus talked of conciliating Severus by appointing him his colleague. The advancing enemy scornfully refused to consider the proposition, and notified the Prætorians that he would pardon them if they surrendered the slayers of Pertinax. The frightened guardsmen lost no time in delivering up three hundred of their comrades; and the Senate — Julianus being utterly without power — decreed the upstart's death. He was slain in his bed, having claimed the purple only sixty-six days. "It was already too much that he should have inscribed his name on the list of emperors" (Duruy).

Severus entered Rome as a conqueror, surrounded by the veteran legionaries of the Danube armies. The miserable Prætorians were contemptuously granted (for the most part) their lives, but their corps was disbanded. Its former members were forbidden, under penalty of death, to come within one hundred miles of Rome. Hitherto the guard corps had been recruited almost wholly from Italy; here-

after it was to be formed by picking men, often sheer barbarians, from *all* the legions. It was hoped that thus the guardsmen would be more amenable to discipline, and more devoted to the Emperor, although this proved hardly to be the case.

3. **Septimius Severus** (reign 193–211 A.D.). — The new Emperor was by descent an African, and so gave another province its turn in the making of Cæsars. He brought to his task experience, ability, courage, a clear vision; but on the other hand, he was without scruple or mercy in striking his enemies. He paid little heed to the august traditions of the Senate. With all his capacity, his reign did not make for the future weal of the Empire.

It required two bitter civil wars to crush Niger and Albinus, the other claimants of the purple. Niger held out in the East, was defeated near Issus <sup>1</sup> in Cilicia, then was soon taken and beheaded (194 A.D.). Albinus (quieted into false hopes of a colleagueship with Severus while the latter was crushing Niger) had advanced into Gaul, but was overcome and slain in a bloody battle near Lugdunum. Severus deserved victory, for he had shown great energy and boldness, but he stained his laurels by cruel treatment of the adherents of the defeated parties. The wife, children, and kinsfolk of Niger

<sup>1</sup> Where Alexander the Great defeated the Persians.

were put to death, along with twenty-nine senators, whose chief offence was the lack of ability to foresee the winning party. One of the victims was dragged before the conqueror ere execution. "If the destiny of battle had been against you," asked the captive, "what would you have done in my present case?" "I should have resigned myself to suffer what you are about to endure," was the unfaltering answer — characteristic of the stern African's whole policy.

These civil wars had cost the Empire sorely in the blood of its soldiers — blood better shed against foreign foes. But Severus, at least, did not spare himself. A fortunate campaign against the Parthians enabled him to pose as a foreign conqueror. He had married a Syrian lady, the beautiful and gifted Julia Domna, and spent much of his time in the East, where he undertook many great public works (*e.g.* the refounding and fostering of the famous desert-city of Palmyra) and organized Mesopotamia as a regular province. Aided by the great lawyer, Papinian, many useful reforms were made in the legal system. The army, too, was strengthened by the establishment of three new legions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Augustus's original twenty-five legions had been raised ultimately to thirty. Now there were thirty-three, not too many considering the increasing problems of the Empire. One of

But the Emperor unluckily undertook to build his power on the favor of the army. His acts were the acts of the unveiled, military despot; he was a second, abler, more rational Domitian, at an age when the old Republican idea of "liberty" had sunken to a mere memory. With his reign the "Principate" became more completely than ever a fiction. And resting thus upon the army, he was compelled to humor the troops in a way dangerous for the future. The soldiers were given an increase of pay and the right to wear gold rings (a privilege hitherto reserved for the equites); and in addition, the restraints upon marriage among the rank and file were taken away. Hereafter a soldier lived with his family, and went to camp only when on duty — a serious blow to discipline. Besides these direct favors, Severus seems regularly to have supported his soldiers against the interests of civilians. He surely won the loyalty of the troops in his lifetime; as surely he laid up woe for his successors.

But idleness was not among his faults. In 208 A.D. he went to remote Britain and spent his last years in fighting the Caledonian tribes and strengthening Hadrian's frontier wall. In 211 A.D. he died at Eboracum (York). "Let us work" (*Laboremus*)

Severus's new legions was stationed in Italy, hitherto exempt from garrisons of ordinary troops of the line.

he gave as his last watchword. He was a potent, though not an admirable or infallibly wise, emperor.

4. **The Successors of Severus (211-222 A.D.); the depraving of the Army.**—Severus had attempted to leave the power divided between his two sons **Caracalla**<sup>1</sup> and **Geta**. Such an arrangement could succeed only if the two sovereigns worked in truly brotherly harmony. Both being vicious and pitiless men, it took less than one year to bring them to strife. In 212 Caracalla, the elder, had his brother slain in the very arms of his mother. Henceforth there was only one monarch (ruling from 211 to 217 A.D.), a ruler in very unfavorable contrast with his great if steely-hearted father. The process of disposing of Geta's friends involved a reign of terror. It is alleged that Caracalla, troubled in conscience, roved over the world, now seeking oblivion in war on the frontier, now indulging in wanton acts of tyranny, — as in a frightful massacre of the populace at Alexandria. The army was loyal to him, for he followed Severus's precept and lavished gold upon it, but his profusion here and elsewhere meant an empty treasury. It was more as a financial measure than as an act of liberality that he bestowed by the famous "*Edict of Caracalla*" the rights of Roman

<sup>1</sup> His real name was Antoninus, but he is more commonly known by this nickname, derived from a Gallic tunic he liked to wear.

citizenship upon all the freeborn of the Empire. Earlier Cæsars had given the franchise very freely. The present act accorded with the policy of Hadrian and Severus in putting provinces and Italy on a level; but especially it enabled Caracalla to collect generally the five per cent inheritance tax from which mere provincials had heretofore been exempt.

In 217 A.D., while Caracalla was in the East, his Prætorian Præfect, **Macrinus** (217-218 A.D.), secured his assassination, and seized the purple; but being himself a feeble, unpopular usurper, he was quickly deserted by the disgusted legions for a claimant possessing at least connection with the house of Severus — the young Syrian **Elagabalus**<sup>1</sup> (218-222 A.D.).

The real rulers, however, instead of the nominal Augustus, were his grandmother, Julia Mæsa (sister of Severus's Empress Julia Domna), and his mother, Julia Scæmias, strong, masterful women who had guided the mutiny of the soldiers which cost Macrinus his life. Upon the appearance of Elagabalus in Rome he speedily gave all the signs of an Oriental degenerate. Wild orgiastic cults were introduced from the East. The Emperor himself combined

<sup>1</sup> Originally named Bassianus, he derived his later name from the Syro-Phœnician sun-god, whose priest he had been.

the follies and cruelties of earlier tyrants with even greater debaucheries. There was enough manhood still at the capital to revolt at some of his excesses. In 221 A.D. the army forced him to proclaim his youthful cousin, Alexander Severus, as co-emperor; and when, in 222 A.D., Elagabalus tried to dispose of Alexander by murder, the angry soldiers slew him. It was a good riddance, but between 217 and 222 A.D. three emperors had perished at the hands of the soldiery. It was evident that the legions were getting out of hand. To curb and rediscipline them would be the great problem of the next reign.

**5. Alexander Severus (reigned 222-235 A.D.); the Last Quiet Reign ere Disaster.** — The next emperor (born 205 A.D.) was also a Syrian, the East now supplying its quota of Cæsars. If passive virtue could have redeemed the situation, Alexander would have redeemed it. He was the son of Julia Mamæa, another daughter of Julia Mæsa. Unlike his vicious cousin, the young ruler in some respects imitated the moral excellences of Marcus Aurelius. Once more philosophy reigned in the palace, and the government boasted itself as conducted on the principles of clemency and justice. The Senate was treated as a coördinate branch of the government. Ulpianus, the leading jurist of his day,



was Prætorian Præfect,<sup>1</sup> and first minister of State. Julia Mamæa, a wise and moderate woman, exercised her power as Empress-mother only for the best. Much was done to reform the legal machinery of the Empire, making justice more speedy and certain. The imperial court was pure. Alexander and his mother set an honorable example in the simplicity and uprightness of their lives. "Do not to another what thou wouldest not have done to thyself" were the words the Emperor caused to be engraved above his palace. Alexander went so far as to cause a statue of Jesus Christ to be set up in his private temple, — along with divers pagan worthies, — a testimony to his willingness to see good even in the founder of a despised religion.

Unluckily, in spite of all these excellent qualities, the new ruler did not exhibit sufficient firmness in dealing with the many serious evils, soon to be enumerated, which afflicted the Empire. Particularly he lacked tact and success in dealing with the army. A victorious general can impose strict discipline, but not an untried young man. "With its mighty army of mercenaries," says the French historian, Duruy, "the Empire was condemned to

<sup>1</sup> By this time the Prætorian Præfect had become highest criminal judge in Italy, "beyond the one-hundredth milestone" from Rome, and consequently had to be a trained lawyer.

have for successful rulers none but great generals. Such had been Severus. Such Alexander was not."

In 228 A.D. the Prætorians, incensed by some stern measures of Ulpianus, murdered the great minister at the very feet of the Emperor. The mutiny was tided over, but in 231 A.D. a serious danger appeared in the East. The decadent Parthian power had been recently overthrown by a revival of the once famous Persian kingdom. The *renewed Persian kingdom* under the dynasty of the *Sassanidæ* was an aggressive and dangerous neighbor for Rome. The Persian kings were ardent Zoroastrians (sun- and fire-worshippers) and brought to their wars something of the terrible Oriental religious fanaticism. Alexander had to confront a deliberate attempt of the *Sassanidæ* to wrest from the Empire all its Asiatic provinces. The unwarlike sovræn was forced to go to the East with the legions and enter upon a fierce and doubtful struggle. Accounts are confused, but the truth seems to be that, although Alexander succeeded in turning back the attack, he did not win any victories decisive enough to revive the glories of Trajan. Despatches to the Senate exaggerated his successes, but the soldiers had no confidence in him. In 235 A.D., while he was on the Rhine preparing to beat back a new inroad of the Germans, a body of disaffected recruits mutinied and slew him

along with his mother. In his place they proclaimed **Maximinus**, a barbarous Thracian, who had only the rudest military virtues to commend him.

With the death of Alexander Severus the period of prosperity (on the wane since 161 A.D.) comes definitely to an end. Destructive causes, long working silently, now became active. The wonder is that the Empire did not perish in the third, rather than in the fifth, century.

**6. Why the Empire Declined.** — It seems an anomaly that after the long rule of the “good emperors” — the most beneficent form of semi-absolutism the world has ever seen — their Empire should so suddenly decline. It is usual to assert that the Romans grew rich, hence luxurious and slothful, and perished because manly virtue had died out among them. Yet this is only partly true. The still great and glorious Empire was suffering from a series of ills, not all of the same kind, and some not briefly traceable. Only a few of these malevolent factors can be discussed.

**I. The Enervating Effects of the Pax Romana.** — The very security of the Empire made for ultimate disaster. Men forgot that it was a human institution and could perish, — that vigilance and patriotism are the price not merely of liberty but of sound government. The emperors, by depriving the individual

of almost all part in caring for the public weal, ultimately deprived him of any public initiative or capacity. Everything depended on the government. When that failed, there was no reserve, moral or physical, among the masses. To most men their public duties ended when they paid their taxes, or perhaps held a civic magistracy. The larger interests of the world were Cæsar's — let him look to them. The use of weapons was almost forgotten save by the legions and a few brutish gladiators. When the legions failed before the enemy, there was no trained militia to fall back upon; and good swordsmen cannot be recruited and drilled in a day.

II. *Slavery and Serfage*. — Here, perhaps, was the most potent single cause of decline. Slavery had been almost the ruin of free labor.<sup>1</sup> But when new provinces ceased to be conquered, slaves ceased to glut the markets; one could not seize free provincials and sell them for farm-hands. Yet the slave régime lasted long enough to put a social stigma on honest toil, and to make the number of free small farmers and free artisans pitifully few. Considerable numbers of slaves, nominally manumitted, rose to a position to which many free farmers were sinking, — to the status of the *coloni*. The *colonus* occupied

<sup>1</sup> See p. 39.

land granted him by a great proprietor; for this he paid a rental, but he was by no means a free tenant, for practically he could not quit this estate which he was working.<sup>1</sup> He was better than a slave, inasmuch as the lord could not sell either him or his little farm separately — they must go together to the new owner. Legally he was still a freeman, but in practice the magistrate would be always on the proprietors' side. Litigation against the latter was nearly hopeless. The status of the *colonus* was also becoming inheritable — from father to son. Once a *colonus* always a *colonus*, unless one was drafted into the army. This system had hardly reached full development by 235 A.D., but it was rapidly becoming common. Ex-slaves, petty farmers who had lost their own land, barbarian captives of the emperors, all became *coloni*: in substance serfs, hopeless, tax-ridden, disloyal. The prosperous middle class — the true prop of society — seemed being destroyed. The very rich confronted the very poor, with next to no barrier between them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Legally he might depart, but practically it involved the abandoning of all his little personal property; no other magnate would welcome a runaway; he would probably starve.

<sup>2</sup> Even as early as the time of Nero we are told that six land-owners divided practically all the great African province between them.

III. *Depopulation*. — All evidence goes to show that the Empire was losing steadily in population even in the prosperous periods. Slavery was destroying the free laboring class, but slaves themselves seldom left large families. Still more disastrous was the fact that the Roman world violated recklessly the moral and social laws which govern the reproduction of mankind. "Vice" in the narrow sense of the term was general, and sternly punished by Nature. The birth-rate was low. Of the first sixteen emperors only two were succeeded by sons born to them, although one or two others had sons who never gained the purple.<sup>1</sup> Especially the upper classes were childless, dreading the expense and trouble of families. Early in the Empire the Greek provinces had dwindled notably in population; in most of Italy the cities once large were decadent and half inhabited. Rome and a few other great centres were kept up by a constant influx from provinces, but many rural sections were lapsing into sheer wilderness, even early in the second century. The Oriental provinces were more prolific, but they were not the most desirable parts of the

<sup>1</sup> The two were, of course, Vespasian and Marcus Aurelius. Tiberius's son, Drusus, died before his father; Claudius's son, Britannicus, survived him, but did not reign; Vitellius had a young son who perished with him.

Empire. There is some ground for saying that the great Græco-Latin stock — the folk of Sophocles, Plato, Cæsar — had reached the limit of its vitality.

IV. *The Waste of Wars.* — This had not been serious until Marcus Aurelius. Then the Marcomanni and Quadi dragged away captives by the tens of thousands. Marcus forced the Quadi alone to surrender 50,000; but how many more were slain or never surrendered! The civil wars following 193 A.D. and the ceaseless strife — foreign and civil — that followed after 235 A.D. involved vast bloodshed and the complete unsettlement of commerce, industry, agriculture; conditions ruinous to the peaceful population that was the mere victim of the actual combatants. All this preyed heavily upon a society ill-prepared to make good its losses.

V. *The Failure of Coined Money.* — The ancient world was ill supplied with precious metals. Some mines in Spain, Thrace, Gaul, Dacia,<sup>1</sup> an uncertain supply from the African deserts, furnished about all the gold and silver. As the imperial period advanced, the amount of circulating medium was steadily lessening. The old mines were becoming exhausted. The jeweller's meltings, the mere fric-

<sup>1</sup> The Dacian mines were exposed to constant interruption by barbarian attack, and in the third century the region was lost outright.

tion of use, hidden hoards (the "treasure in the field" — oldest of savings banks), or exports of actual coin to India in exchange for pearls and spices, — all reduced the stock of coin. Presently the coinage began to be eked out with base metal. Under Nero the silver denarius (about 16 cents) was almost pure; under Alexander Severus it was fifty to sixty per cent alloy. In the evil days following Alexander the debasement became still greater. A "silver" piece would contain only twenty, ten, or five per cent of real silver, often a mere white plating over the copper alloy. The standard gold piece (*aureus*) was reduced in weight and fineness also, and was constantly appreciating in value, since the government now insisted that taxes be paid in gold rather than in the utterly debased silver. Finally, in despair for other mediums, the men of the Empire fell back on base copper, which at least could not be depreciated. The "follis" — *i.e.* a sealed bag of about 500 small copper coins — was used, and passed around in the place of standard gold and silver pieces.

All this failure of the coinage involved a terrible unsettlement of commerce and industry. Even government officials were driven to draw part of their salaries in silken robes, measures of wheat, horses, mules, etc., rather than in the unreliable



money. Men were forced to rely again on mere trade by barter. This was more than an inconvenience. It was a step backward in civilization, the substitution of primitive "natural" economy for the advanced "money" economy.

VI. *The Legions Barbarized.* — Thanks to the long peace, first the Italians, — the men who had conquered Hannibal, Jugurtha, and Vercingetorix, — then the Romanized provincials themselves, had lost the military habit. Roman senators had become very loath to endure the hardships of camp life. It was counted surprising under the later Empire to find a young man of good family in the army. Military successes were still honored, but the typical cultured man of the Empire had almost a Chinese contempt for the military profession. Adventurers — mere soldiers of fortune, seekers of pelf and preferment; helpless *coloni* dragged by the drafting officer from the bondage of their farms to the bondage of the centurion's discipline; or downright barbarians, men with un-Latinized names, from beyond the Danube, battle-worthy, but without loyalty to the Empire, — these came more and more to compose the major part of the legions, both officers and men.

Such an army might still, owing to its discipline and military traditions, be able to win victories, but it would become increasingly hard to control, and

increasingly willing to follow any chief who promised his men some selfish advantage. Again, this army was a mere thin line spread along the frontiers. Once this line was broken through, there were practically no interior garrisons to fall back upon. Province after province, wealthy, helpless, might be ravaged by the barbarian invader, until the legions of this unreliable, un-Roman army could be summoned from unthreatened parts to hunt the ravagers down.

Under these circumstances the danger of crowning disaster would be great unless the Germans and Persians kept unusually quiet. On the contrary, they were about to show unusual activity.

VII. *The Decline in Civilization and Culture.* — This can be noted even apart from the causes mentioned above. Outside the new Christian Church men were largely ceasing to develop ideas and ideals. Except in the mere writing of law books, Latin literature seemed almost dead by the third century, and Greek literature in a hardly better case. No great poems or noble prose works were written. Hellenic sculpture, becoming in the Roman age ever more artificially elaborate, was now in a rapid decline. Architecture still was able to achieve certain triumphs, — *e.g.*, the famous Baths of Caracalla at Rome, — but these were triumphs of the

grandiose, not of the beautiful. At Alexandria, however, and elsewhere in the Grecianized East, there was a certain amount of pedantic learning and refurbishing of old ideas and philosophies.

The plain fact seems to have been that the classic impulse—the great fund of thoughts given the world by the Hellenes, and distributed through the world by the Romans—had almost spent itself. The old pagan religions, vainly rekindled by Augustus, were sinking to ashes. Men as yet untouched by Christianity were turning to divers new superstitions, as will be explained hereafter,<sup>1</sup>—a testimony to the fact that man needs a religion, and if the old one fail, he will speedily make another.

The last word had been almost spoken in pagan poetry, pagan art, pagan philosophy; and when a civilization ceases to go forward, it ossifies, which is the same in effect as going back. There was much intelligence, virtue, love of law and order in the world in 235 A.D., but most of it was not of the kind to make itself aggressively effective. Under these circumstances, and considering the undermining causes just named, it is a tribute to the vitality still left in the Empire that it was able to endure through the storms of the third century, and enjoy a fleeting Indian summer in the fourth.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 163.

**7. The Great Disasters of the Empire (235-268 A.D.).** — It is almost impossible to sketch the annals of the Empire for the thirty-three years following the slaying of Alexander Severus. Cæsar follows Cæsar as each is raised and slain by the armies. Germanic tribes and Persian kings cast themselves upon the provinces. Cities are blotted out. Whole provinces are temporarily lost. Historical records become confused and inferior. Often about our best evidence is derived from a few debased coins struck by some emperor whose reign must be reckoned not by years but by days. The names of the wearers of the purple in this generation are usually to us names, and nothing more. To clothe them with flesh and blood is difficult. Yet, despite everything, there was a certain imperial continuity, and an effort may be made to trace it.

A few years (235-238) disgusted the provinces with the brutal **Maximinus**. Three short-lived emperors, father, son, and grandson (**Gordianus I**, and **Gordianus II**, who both died in 238, and **Gordianus III**, who reigned 238 to 244), followed him. The purple then passed to the Prætorian Præfect, **Philip the Arabian** (244-249), alleged to be a secret Christian, yet for all that a very unworthy ruler. But in 249 A.D. a revolt of the Pannonian legions put **Decius** (249-251) upon the throne. His reign was even

more troubled than the preceding, for in it the dangerous northern tribe of the Goths (appearing now in force along the Danube) forced itself into the Balkan peninsula. Decius hastened to check their ravages, but after some combats, in which the Goths showed themselves able to face the disorganized Romans on equal terms, a pitched battle was fought near the Danube (251 A.D.). Decius and his son perished in the defeat. Even the Emperor's body was not recovered. For the first time a barbarian enemy had vanquished and slain a Cæsar.

And now disaster followed disaster. The title to empire seemed to belong to any general whose soldiers would bestow it. The Senate at Rome could only satisfy the choice of the legions nearest at hand; the præfects and centurions were the true electors. Unfortunately, they were almost as quick to withdraw their allegiance as to grant it; and the deposition of an emperor meant his death. *Between the death of Septimius Severus and the year 270, not one of the many wearers of the purple died in his bed.*<sup>1</sup> While pretender thus rose against pretender, while mutiny became a chronic condition for the legions, the enemy, Goths along the Danube, Alemanni in Northern Italy, Franks in Gaul, Persians in Syria,

<sup>1</sup> Unless Valerianus, who perished in a Persian prison, can be considered to have died naturally.

ravaged the luckless provinces almost at will. The whole Empire was like a man in the grip of some foul disease.

**Gallus** (251-253) endured through a nominal reign of two years; **Æmilianus** (253) lasted only four months ere his soldiers slew him. **Valerianus** (253-260), the most worthy in the long line of unfortunates, reigned seven years, fighting valiantly, but hardly successfully, against the crowding invaders and rebels. In 260 he went on an expedition against the Persians, was defeated, captured, exhibited by the haughty King Sapor in Oriental triumph, and died in captivity. His captor is said to have caused his skin to be stuffed, tanned, and painted purple, in token that its one-time owner had been the successor of Augustus, and Trajan.

The captive emperor had left a son as co-emperor, **Gallienus** (260-268), but his rule was confined largely to Italy. Unable to secure help from the central government, the provinces were beginning to shift for themselves. In Gaul and Spain *Postumus* reigned as a practically independent "Emperor of the Gauls," defending those regions against the harrying Franks. In Syrian Palmyra *Odenathus*, a local merchant prince, raised himself almost to sovereignty by his bold defence of the region against the Persians. Gallienus himself, sunk in indolent

pleasures, and pretending some zeal for philosophy, was wholly incapable of coping with a desperate situation. Hardly a legion but forced the purple upon its sometimes unwilling commander. If he won, would they not reap a great donativum? Nineteen odd pretenders seem to have made their bid for empire about this time. Their very number interfered with their success. They killed one another off. "Comrades, you lose a good general, and you make a worthless emperor," cynically remarked an officer, when his men cast the purple mantle over him. And all the time the Goths were descending from the Black Sea in hordes, and ravaging the coasts of Greece and Asia Minor. The frontier defences were completely broken. Peace, security to person and property, everything man might hold dear, seemed all but lost forever. There were, however, honest hearts and level heads still in the army. A series of successful generals from the great Illyrian provinces north and east of the Adriatic were to crush the usurpers, beat back the barbarians, restore at least a measure of good government.

In 268 Gallienus was murdered while attacking at Milan the pretender Aureolus. The chiefs of the imperial army knew their duty. They thrust into office one of the ablest of their number, Claudius (II), and secured for him the support of the sol-

diery. Aureolus was overpowered, and the worst turn of the internal crisis was past.

8. **Claudius II, "Gothicus"** (reign 268–270 A.D.). — At last a capable and patriotic man was hailed as Augustus — almost, but not entirely, too late to save the life of the Empire. Yet even Claudius, a seasoned Illyrian officer, could not restore the unity of the Empire. A rival must be left reigning in Gaul, another in Syria, while with all the remaining might of the Danube legions he went against the Goths, who were ravaging — as yet almost unchecked — the Balkan peninsula. After much campaigning they were at last brought to bay at *Naissus* (in modern Serbia). The old Roman discipline won a great victory. Rightly was the conqueror hailed as "*Germanicus Maximus*" in his lifetime, and enrolled in history as "Claudius Gothicus." But he did not live to follow up his success. In 270 A.D. he died a natural death — a rare fate for a third-century emperor! However, the Roman world did not suffer, for his successor was the great Aurelian.

9. **Aurelian, "Restorer of the World"** (reign 270–275). — Aurelian, to whom as much as to any one man the Empire owed its renewed lease of life, was the son of Illyrian peasants. He had entered the army as a common soldier, and had risen in the reign of Valerianus to an important generalship. His im-



perial reign lasted only four years and nine months, but in that time, as Gibbon says, "he put an end to the Gothic War, chastised the Germans who invaded Germany, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain, . . . and destroyed the proud monarchy which Zenobia (widow of Odenathus) had erected in the East." His life was spent in abounding activity. Considering the demoralized state of his army, it is fair to rank his successes above Trajan's and on a par with Julius Cæsar's.

I. The first peril was from the *Goths*. Claudius had not lived long enough to crush them utterly. Aurelian pushed the war against them till they were glad to make treaty. They were to stay beyond the Danube and supply the army with auxiliaries; but Aurelian paid a price heavy for Roman pride; Dacia, the northern province, was to be silently evacuated for them. Probably the Empire still held only a few forts in the exposed region, and these hard to maintain, and the land gave no financial or military strength; yet, although it was easy to provide new homes, south of the Danube, for the former dwellers in Dacia, it could not be concealed that the boundaries of the Roman world were contracting. It is a sign of Aurelian's greatness that he dared to face this necessity.

II. The Goths were quieted, but another Ger-

manic horde, the *Alemanni*, cast itself into Italy. The whole rich Po valley seemed in the hands of their fierce cavalry. They were soon before the great city of Milan, and panic reigned even in Rome. Aurelian hastened with the legions by forced marches from the Danube to head off this onslaught. There were two desperate battles, the first indecisive. The second took place on the little river *Metaurus*, where once the brother of Hannibal (207 B.C.) had dragged down the Carthaginian cause in his defeat by the Romans. Here, again, the legions conquered. Hardly one of the invaders escaped northward to tell their tale; but the danger had revealed to Aurelian another painful requirement. For centuries Rome had been without walls. Her ramparts had been a victorious army. Now — a confession of weakness, yet of need — *Aurelian caused Rome to be fortified*, “a great and a melancholy work.”

III. The northern danger had now in a measure passed. But in the East had risen that which menaced direfully the unity of the Empire. In *Zenobia of Palmyra* had arisen a new, and in some ways a more dangerous, Cleopatra. Odenathus, prince of the great desert city, had perished. His queen — a beautiful, accomplished, masculine woman — maintained his power. She is said to have ridden regu-

larly with her troops on horseback, to have marched at their head for miles on foot. In the general prostration of the Roman power, Egypt and Syria cheerfully welcomed the rule of this masterful Palmyrene, whose cavalry, drawn from the warlike Arabian desert tribes,<sup>1</sup> — had beaten back the Persian king after the downfall of Valerianus. She called her sons *Augusti*, and by Claudius II they had been given a certain tactful recognition. "Herself she called "Queen of the East," — a title that might mean much or little, as power was given her to assert it.

Aurelian might at first temporize with this Amazonian sultana; he could clearly never allow her to sever one-third of the Empire from the West. In 273 A.D. he marched against her, defeated her cavalry with his better-drilled legions, penetrated undauntedly with his army even the waterless desert to the oasis of Palmyra. All resistance was vain. Zenobia became a captive. Palmyra, revolting against its new Roman garrison, was devastated. The East was once more obedient to the Empire.

IV. Then Aurelian could turn himself to the West. As "Gallic Emperor" Postumus (mur-

<sup>1</sup> In some ways this short-lived supremacy of Palmyra in the East was an *Arab* empire, the precursor of the later Moslem empires.

dered by his troops) had been succeeded by *Tetricius*. But Tetricius feared his own soldiers, and deliberately betrayed them when Aurelian advanced (274 A.D.). The deposed emperor was taken captive, of course, but treated with the greatest consideration, and the western provinces were reunited to the world, under the ægis of the restored *Pax Romana*.

V. A vast work had been accomplished. Goths, Alemanni, Palmyrenes, Gallic rebels, all had been beaten down; likewise a lesser uprising in Egypt which Aurelian's generals could cope with. In 274 A.D. Aurelian celebrated a magnificent triumph in Rome, and never was one more worthily earned. In fetters of gold Tetricius and Zenobia were led before the conqueror as he rode in his car of state, drawn by four stags,<sup>1</sup> while Goths, Vandals, Scythians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, Egyptians, were marched in the long train of captives through the acclaiming city.

In his wars Aurelian found little time for careful civil reforms. A beginning seems to have been made at the restoration of the coinage. In 275 A.D. the mighty Emperor was at Perinthus on his

<sup>1</sup> Yet be it noted that not merely Tetricius (who surrendered on conditions), but Zenobia also, were pensioned and presented with palaces near Rome. Aurelian was as magnanimous as he was victorious.

way to chastise the Persians, when a secretary, who feared his just anger, induced some officers to slay him, by pretending that Aurelian designed their ruin. Few murders have been more criminal, yet brief as had been his reign, Aurelian had restored the Empire to a large measure of its former glory.

**10. From Aurelian to Diocletian (275-284 A.D.).**

—The army leaders soon recognized their crime; in contrition they deliberately refused to name a new emperor, and asked to be given one by the now decrepit and long-ignored Roman Senate. That venerable body at length named an aged senator, **Tacitus** (September, 275, to April, 276), whose reign was too short to prove either ability or incapacity. On his death his brother **Florianus** tried to seize the purple, but the army this time asserted itself and put in power **Probus** (276-282), one of the best of Aurelian's lieutenants, a native of Sirmium in Pannonia, who had risen, like his chief, round by round in the army, and who now took up not unworthily the task Aurelian had laid down.

A feeling seemed general that there had been too much military dictatorship even for the sovran's own good. Probus deliberately humored the Senate. It was permitted to direct most of the civil administration of the Empire, and was respectfully consulted,

while Probus found a new series of invasions sufficient to keep him busy. The Franks had again descended upon Gaul, and other peoples appeared — Vandals and Burgundians. Probus beat them back for the time, and strengthened the line of Rhenish and Danubian barrier walls and forts. Large numbers of the captive invaders are said to have been settled in small colonies throughout the waste lands of the Empire, — a testimony to the depopulation of the provinces, also a dangerous infusion of non-Romanized blood that might not be soon assimilated.<sup>1</sup> It was a successful if not wholly peaceful reign, but in 286 Probus met the usual fate of military emperors, — a band of mutineers slew him. The officers elected **Carus** (282–283), a native of Gaul, to succeed him. This sturdy soldier conducted a victorious campaign against the Persians, but died in the East, while on the expedition. **Numerianus** (283), one of his sons who had gone with him on the expedition, was proclaimed by the army, but was presently murdered by his prætorian præfect, **Aper**, doubtless with his own hopes for the sovereignty. At Chalcedon (opposite

<sup>1</sup> This process of settling conquered barbarians in the vacant lands can be traced back to Marcus Aurelius, who began that “peaceful” Germanizing of the provinces which probably wrought almost as great changes ultimately as the regular invasions.

Byzantium), however, the army halted. The troops would have nothing to do with the murderer; **Diocletian**, a humble-born Dalmatian, but the best soldier in the host, was clothed with the purple; and Aper was publicly stabbed to death by the new Caesar. From 283 to 285 A.D., **Carinus** (Numerianus's brother), held out as ruler in the West till he fell in battle with Diocletian.

At length the Empire had secured not only a good general, but a great civil reorganizer. Diocletian was to undertake the work of internal reform which Aurelian did not live to accomplish. He also was to find the Empire and its old religions face to face with the new force and virtue of Christianity. Diocletian was to be practically the last great pagan emperor.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE EMPIRE

**1. The Religious Revival; Mithras Worship.** — There is abundant evidence that if Christianity had never arisen, the old-style paganism of the Græco-Roman world would have been profoundly modified. The age of Cicero had been an age of scepticism; that of Augustus of an outward official revival of old paganism; by the age of Nero a more marked reaction was taking place. Out of the East — the home land of so many good and bad cults — a strong religious influence was spreading over the West. It expressed itself in the favor with which a diluted form of Judaism was received by prominent Romans, notably by Poppæa Sabina, the Empress of Nero; by the popularity, especially among the women, of the Egyptian worship of Isis and the Phrygian worship of Cybele; wild, orgiastic cults, yet having an element perhaps of sacrifice and atonement for personal sin, — an element almost wholly



wanting in the stately formalism of the worship of Jupiter and Minerva. We are not degrading Christianity in saying that it was part of the same movement, — an attempt from the East to supply the religious wants of the less imaginative, more intellectual West.

But Christianity found another rival, more formidable than the above named, which for a moment seemed likely to outshine it by far. Even as Christianity was the outgrowth of Judaism, so **Mithraism** was the product of Persian Zoroastrianism.<sup>1</sup> Mithras, the glorious minister and companion of Ahura-Mazda, the high and holy God, was associated in old Persian belief with the sacred fire, and particularly with the life-giving Sun. In this form he fitted readily into the Græco-Roman cults as a kind of modified Apollo. But he was far more than simply Apollo under another name. As he won believers in the West, an elaborate form of worship was imported from the Orient with him. Nero himself desired to be initiated into the Persian rites, and later emperors looked on the new cultus with favor. While it did not imply a suppression of the

<sup>1</sup> Zoroaster, the semi-mythical prophet of Persia, seems to have taught a kind of dualism, — the constant war of the good and evil principles, with the ultimate triumph of the good; by no means an ignoble religion.

old gods, it did seem to satisfy a very real human need, — the purification of mankind from sin. Mithras was portrayed as a heroic warrior-youth, a "Fiend-Smiter"; he was styled "The Unconquerable Sun," favorable in temporal affairs to his worshippers, potent also to help in the world hereafter.<sup>1</sup> Mithraism presently developed a kind of ritual, in some points an unconscious parody upon Christian services; meetings of worshippers for celebration of the mysteries, a manner of clergy, who probably in set sermons would expound their system of the cosmogony; and most solemn of all, the rite of the *taurobolium*,<sup>2</sup> the awful baptism in the blood of a dying bull, whereby the believer was imagined to partake of the strength of the slain creature, and to have his soul renewed in its pristine sinlessness.

As the third century advanced, the cult of Mithraism became continually more popular. The army, especially, adopted it almost to the partial exclusion of the old gods. Scattered along the frontiers — in remote fortress towns in Dacia, Britain, Gaul — we trace, usually by altars and inscriptions, the signs of the Mithraic temples and congregations. The

<sup>1</sup> The Persian faith implied an immortal soul rewarded according to deserts with heaven or hell.

<sup>2</sup> A rite shared by Mithraism with the rival cult of the "Great Mother" (Cybele), etc.

conqueror, Aurelian, was an especial favorer of the Sun cultus, and his temple to *Sol Invictus* is one of the last great pagan monuments in Rome.

With its stately ritual, its promise of immortality, its demands for a relatively "pure" life, on the other hand, its freedom from a difficult, high incomprehensible theology, Mithraism was a dangerous rival to Christianity during the second and third centuries.

Another foe was in that revived pagan philosophy known as *Neoplatonism* (founded by Plotinus of Egypt, 203-262 A.D.), — an attempt to reconcile the old mythology with the philosophy of Plato and also with the new Oriental ideas, Jewish, Christian, and Persian, then current. Such a philosophy was convenient to many intelligent men who found Christianity too full of hard sayings. This anti-Christian party, realizing the power of a great personality, actually endeavored to raise the philosopher *Apollonius of Tyana* (almost a contemporary of Christ) to a level with the Founder of Christianity, attributing to him all the virtues of a saint and miracle-worker.<sup>1</sup>

These attempts to put new wine in old bottles,

<sup>1</sup> Note that to the later Pagans Christ's miracles presented no vast difficulty. The age was becoming increasingly credulous. Julian the Apostate (died 363), the last imperial champion of paganism, complained that Christ's miracles were mean, puny, and unworthy of a son of God.

to spiritualize and revivify paganism, were not likely to succeed, but they testify to the growing *need* felt by an age of unquelled desolation and tumult for a vital and consolatory religion.

**2. Christianity and the Pagan Power.** — Humanly speaking, Christianity owes a vast debt to the Roman Empire. The throwing down of all race barriers, the firm, equitable government, the relative ease of communication, allowed Christianity to spread through the world after a fashion simply impossible in any earlier age. The Romans had good humoredly tolerated all the native cults, and it mattered little if a faction of the Jews chose to separate from their fellows and hold a different manner of worship.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, however, the Romans came to realize that Christianity and Judaism were not synonymous. Many Gentiles were following the new religion. Circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic "Law" were not required by the new sect. Very important in the history of the world had been that "Council at Jerusalem" (about 50 A.D.), when St. Paul and Barnabas persuaded the Apostles

<sup>1</sup> Inevitably the case of Gallio (elder brother of Seneca) is recalled, who, as governor of Achaia in 53 A.D., refused to consider the charges of the Corinthian Jews against St. Paul, and drove the litigants from his *prætorium*. (Acts xviii. 14 ff.)

and elders of the young Church that Gentile members need not become Jews in order to be good Christians. Hereafter, especially following the disaster of Judaism in 70 A.D., the two creeds have less and less in common, until the Jewish element becomes a very small fraction of the great Christian body.

But Christianity now had to face fully the social, and occasionally the governmental, opposition of the Roman world. Its progress was slow. It required nearly three centuries from the earthly passing of its Founder to its acceptance as a tolerated religion by the Empire. The reasons why Christianity was not readily endured by a world that received Mithraism, Isis-worship, Neoplatonism, etc., are not far to seek.

I. *Christianity, unlike Mithraism, demanded a complete break with the old gods*, not simply a new god in the Pantheon. And in the forms of society, in the prejudices of the mob, in the machinery of government, the old ancestral worship still lived on. It was a species' of treason to repudiate the gods of one's fathers, even if one did not believe in them very heartily.

II. *The Christians usually recruited their numbers from the lower classes*, the poor, the slaves, — those to whom the Christian hope of future happiness

would most immediately appeal. An organization of such elements was sure to be ridiculed; and certain Christian theories, as *e.g.* contempt for worldly misfortune, were easily distorted into "misanthropy," "hatred of the human race." Private Christian gatherings were charged with being the scene of horrid orgies. The story current was that the Christians worshipped a malefactor who had an ass's head, and who had died the vilest death — that of the cross.

III. *The Christians, unlike almost all other cults, appealed to every race and portion of the Empire.* The Egyptian must forsake Anubis, the Gallic Druid his sacred oak, all to enter a common organization and serve a common Master. This common organization in almost every province<sup>1</sup> gave the Roman government fear. Even enlightened emperors might dread an *imperium in imperio*, a society which withdrew its members partially from their allegiance to the Empire, and which encouraged them to place their litigation before the arbitration of the "Church" rather than before the prætor. So Christianity was held to come into the catalogue of forbidden religions (*e.g.* the Bacchanals, — a hideously immoral cult), or again the laws

<sup>1</sup> There is good reason for thinking, however, that the majority of the Christians were for a long time in the East.

against unauthorized *collegia* (guilds or quasi-labor unions) might be invoked against it.

IV. *In refusing to burn incense to the "genius" of the reigning emperor and the departed and deified Augusti, the Christians laid themselves open to the constant charge of disloyalty.* Vainly they protested that they prayed for the reigning Cæsar, and for his success and victory. They would not "worship" any living man or his predecessors. The government felt obliged to hold that they were refusing the act of allegiance, by which all men must prove their adhesion to the all-important Empire.

It is needless to catalogue the various "persecutions" of the Church by the authorities, *i.e.* attempts to break up the Christian communities and to force the members to burn incense, if not to the old gods, at least to the emperor. Nero's persecution had simply been an attempt to make a scapegoat for the fire at Rome out of a very unpopular sect. Pliny the Younger, while ruling Bithynia (about 112 A.D.), found the Christians very numerous. The old temples were even deserted. He writes to Trajan, asking how these misdemeanants shall be punished for violating the law against unauthorized cults and societies. Trajan replies humanely that Christians are not to be sought out by inquisitorial process, but if a case seems clear,

the defendant must be required to sacrifice to the old gods; if he refuses, he must, of course, suffer death, as the member of a forbidden organization. During the second century there were occasional persecutions, not usually the systematic efforts of the emperors to root out the new religion, but either the results of overmuch zeal on the part of some local magistrate, or the outbreak of popular superstition and mob wrath. A famine, an intimation from the jealous priests of the city-temples, "The Gods withhold rain on account of the Christians!" an excited, hungry rabble clamoring, "The Christians to the lions!" before the Prætorium, the compliant governor, the last scene in the arena, — such, with local variations, would be the typical story of many martyrdoms.

Generally speaking, in normal times the Christians were regularly attacked by the law. The pressure upon them was *social* rather than physical. But the law gave its aid to sudden and fierce persecution. So the new religion slowly won its adherents down to the day of Alexander Severus.

**3. Christianity in the Third Century.** — Alexander Severus had accorded a distinct toleration to the Christians. Philip the Arabian was entirely friendly, if not an actual convert; but under Decius the period of calm ended. The Empire was now



plunged deep in difficulties. It was natural for even a relatively good emperor — and such Decius was — to see in this growing sect one of the prime causes of the general disintegration. As the great German historian, Ranke, has well said, "The emperor united state and religion; Christianity separated before all things that which was God's from that which was Cæsar's" — there could therefore be no long truce between a Christian Church and a pagan Empire.

The persecution under Decius (the so-called "Seventh Persecution") was "the first which historians unite in calling general. It was a systematic effort to uproot Christianity throughout the Empire." The whole power of the governmental police was put forth. Thousands of Christians were seized, tortured, sent to the arena or scaffold, or to a more lingering death of hard labor in the mines. It must be said that the persecuted often deliberately sought "the martyr's crown," defying the officials to do their worst, and compelling mercifully minded præfects to inflict the extreme penalty. In the peaceful years preceding, the Church had acquired many fair-weather adherents who now fell promptly away; yet the calmness with which large companies of humble men and women endured stripes, bonds, and death for the sake of conscience

put its impress on many an intelligent Pagan. The attitude of the Emperor was logical; Decius is reported to have said he would rather have a second emperor in Rome than a Christian bishop — an unconscious prophecy of the secular power those bishops of Rome were one day to claim. It was a sharp, bitter struggle. The leading spirit among the Christians was the great Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who took the consistent attitude of neither seeking the martyr's crown by rash presumption, nor shunning it when brought to the ordeal. Cyprian went into retirement and saved himself temporarily. The swords of the Goths ended Decius on the dread battle-field in Thrace. The next emperors had other things to think of. The edicts against the Christians were not repealed, but the fury of persecution waned for the moment.

In 257-258 Valerianus revived the attack. There were more arrests, confiscations, and executions. The chief martyr this time was Cyprian, as well as Sixtus II, Bishop of Rome. But the capture of the Emperor by the Persians<sup>o</sup> left his son Gallienus in power, and that incompetent ruler's one good act was his edict of toleration to the sect he lacked the power and possibly the disposition to crush. The Christians were now allowed to have their cemeteries, their churches (already, it would seem, large

and handsome buildings), and they could conduct their worship openly. There is evidence that in the decades between Gallienus and Diocletian the Christians grew rapidly in numbers and social status. Senators, *Equites*, army officers, ladies of the imperial court, were not ashamed to adhere to a religion that had once been accounted vile.

By the year 300 A.D. the Christians were still possibly not more than five per cent of the whole population; but their cohesive enthusiasm gave them far greater weight than their numbers seemed to warrant. Most of the active intelligence of the decadent age was in the Church. The Pagans had the wealth, the famous temples, the philosophers' schools. But while Paganism still had millions of adherents, it had practically no martyrs. Who was willing to die for Isis or Apollo? Under these circumstances, a wise emperor might well ask whether, since Christianity could not be conquered, it could not be *controlled*? In other words, whether the aggressiveness and organized activity of the Church could not be made useful to the Empire by recognizing Christianity as the state religion?

When Diocletian became emperor, this question was on the point of being propounded to the government. The Christians had formed a close organization; they had cast out dissenters ("heretics")

from their midst. Their bishops were arraying themselves gradually in a compact body under the lead of the Bishop of Rome in the West, and the bishops of Antioch and of Alexandria in the East. To root them out was probably beyond the powers of the administration. What, then, would Diocletian do? Fortunately for his fame, he did not attempt at first to answer the question.

**4. Diocletian; the Recasting of the Empire; reign 284-305.** — Valerius Diocletianus had been born in 245 at Salona in Dalmatia, of very humble parentage. He had been a trusted officer under Aurelian and Probus. His election by the army was a wise choice. Not an easy philosopher, nor an art patron, but a vigorous soldier and a daring administrator was needed — and Diocletian was such a man. The two decades of his reign were years of extreme activity. In them the Roman Empire was practically recast.

I. Early in his reign Diocletian recognized that the Empire offered problems too great for one man. A division of the office (*a*) enabled at least one Emperor to be present in person on a threatened frontier; and (*b*) discouraged rebels, since they must now overthrow two enemies, not one. In 286 Diocletian raised to the purple first as "Cæsar," then as full "Augustus," his old comrade **Maxi-**

**ianus**, also a humble-born Pannonian, a rough but capable soldier. To him was intrusted the defence of the Western Provinces, while Diocletian kept his control especially in the East.

II. This arrangement was not unhappy, but the perils of the Empire thickened. There was war with the barbarians along the Danube and Rhine; the African Moors and Egyptians were uneasy; Persia threatened invasion. Britain was held by a rebel general who claimed the purple. To relieve the great burden, Diocletian made another subdivision of powers. He and Maximianus took two junior colleagues with the title of *Cæsar* (293 A.D.) in the West the capable and refined **Constantius Chlorus**, in the East the capable but more uncouth **Galerius**. These junior emperors were to be the lieutenants of the senior emperors, and were given their daughters in marriage. In due time the senior rulers were to retire and let the juniors become Augusti. In this way the younger rulers, being assured of the ultimate succession, were to be kept from revolt.

As the subdivisions were worked out, Maximianus, with his capital at Milan,<sup>1</sup> ruled directly Italy,

<sup>1</sup> Rome became a very inconvenient place of residence as soon as the emperors had to be much on the frontiers. Diocletian paid it only a most grudging visit, to the vast disgust of the city multitude.

Spain, and Africa; Constantius Chlorus ruled over Gaul, and soon recovered Britain from Treves;<sup>1</sup> Galerius held the bulk of the Balkan peninsula with the Danube frontier, ruling from Sirmium on the Save; while Diocletian himself ruled the Eastern Provinces from Nicomedia in Bithynia. The arrangement was not a bad one as long as the commanding personality of Diocletian made the junior rulers act together. It broke down completely when the master's grip relaxed, and the selfish "colleagues" began each to struggle for the glittering prize of the sole sovereignty. Diocletian's scheme, like many others, had one capital defect, — it was too ingenious to succeed.

III. For the moment, however, all went well. The barbarians were flung back on every side. Rebels were crushed. Peace was dictated to humbled Persia. Great undertakings for rebuilding and renovation in the sorely ravaged provinces (especially in Gaul) were carried out. Constantius, in particular, distinguished himself by a praiseworthy founding of schools of learning. By the year 300 A.D. the Empire was enjoying a general peace and prosperity it had not known for many years.

<sup>1</sup> Become a great frontier city on the Moselle, an excellent place for the ruler who had to defend the imperilled Rhine frontier.

IV. Diocletian realized that most of the misery of the preceding century had been due to the ascendancy of the army and the ease with which any general could become a usurper. To check these vicious tendencies he took two steps that do not deserve entire praise.

(a) To make the emperor's person seem more sacred, hence exempt from attack, he deliberately introduced the Oriental court ceremonial,<sup>1</sup> a glittering diadem, a vast retinue of "sacred" court officers, the prostration before the throne of majesty, a magnificent palace and guards of honor, and the like. The emperor hereafter was to live retired, a demigod in his holy of holies.

(b) To make the army officers less able to organize revolt, *the old-time legions were broken up into much smaller bands*. In place of thirty-three there were several times as many,<sup>2</sup> but with only about two thousand men to the corps. Although the size of the army was actually increased, the commanders of such small groups could hardly hope to become usurpers. The *esprit de corps* and unity of the old army was gone, and nothing really was done

<sup>1</sup> Aurelian had already taken some steps in that direction.

<sup>2</sup> By about 400 A.D. there were one hundred and seventy-five such reduced "legions"; one can hardly say how many of them Diocletian organized.

to improve the quality of the recruits. They were still conscripts from the lowest class of rustics, or downright barbarian volunteers, with many barbarian officers.

The army thus was somewhat weakened; the new and magnificent court cost heavily, and was a constant object-lesson in servility; yet it must be admitted that Diocletian partially attained his object. There were on the whole fewer mutinies and usurpers than before.

V. With Diocletian ends any fiction of a joint rule of princeps and Senate. The emperor makes laws by his own personal rescript. The Senate is merely the city-council of Rome. Diocletian was an avowed despot. The taxation system was remoulded so as to exact the uttermost tribute to sustain *four* expensive courts and greedy armies. Italy, deprived of her old privileges, was reduced to a level with all the other provinces. In 301 A.D. the "Lord and Master" of the world issued his famous "*Edict of Prices*," a well-meant but absurd attempt to fix the maximum price for almost every commodity, with the death penalty for demanding more. An attempt like this to set aside the laws of supply and demand shows Diocletian as a zealous but very fallible man. Hard circumstances soon caused the "Edict of Prices" to be brushed aside. It passed



into history along with the author's untimely policy touching the growing body of the Christians.

**5. The Great Persecution under Diocletian.** — The reformer of the Empire, hard-headed practical man of affairs that he was, had through his reforms made certain aims sufficiently clear; namely, the final ending of all "republican" pretence, the establishment of a system of inheritance from the senior Augustus which should stop the constant scrambles for the purple, the abolition of the dictatorship of the army, and the public installation of the absolutist government. He seemed in a fair way to succeed therewith. Could he so succeed if he allowed to exist in this Empire which he was remoulding another allegiance, even one to an invisible God? The fact was, that Diocletian, a late representative of the cold, pragmatic Roman spirit, was completely unable to understand a body of men who were ardent followers of an unworldly ideal, as were the Christians. This antagonism of temperaments and aims was one obstacle; another was the fact that Diocletian, probably more than most contemporaneous Pagans, was a believer in the old gods. "Jovius," the representative of Jupiter, he officially styled himself, and the priests and haruspices of the old religion had large influence over him. Again, Galerius, the junior emperor in the East, was vio-

lently anti-Christian, and urged his more cautious senior forward. Diocletian did not strike at once. His wife and his daughter were claimed by the Christians. The Church was lulled into security. Then in 298 A.D. the order went forth that all soldiers and public officials must sacrifice to the gods.

The command drove many Christians from the public service; others stifled their consciences and complied; others evaded the order. But after much hesitation, urged on by Galerius and the pagan priests, Diocletian struck harder. In 303, following a council of the dignitaries of the Empire, it was ordained that Christianity should be suppressed throughout the Roman world.<sup>1</sup> The splendid Christian church building at Nicomedia was at once destroyed. A wholesale persecution was begun. The Christian churches were everywhere to be razed, their sacred writings seized and burned; Christian freemen were debarred from all honors and all rights as litigants, and Christian slaves could never receive liberty.

The Christians met this edict with bold acts of defiance. A destructive fire which broke out in the imperial palace was laid at their door. A second

<sup>1</sup> This decree (as all others of the time) was in the name of the four emperors, but Diocletian, the guiding spirit of them all, was the responsible author.

edict ordered that all Christian clergy should be cast into prison; later decrees commanded all Christians to sacrifice to the old gods on pain of bondage and torture. The death penalty was not directly ordained, but it was imposed by many overzealous magistrates. The full enginery of the law was put at work to hunt out the proscribed sectaries. In divers towns the tale runs — on no perfect authority, to be sure — that the executioners grew weary of their tasks, and the sated beasts of the arena refused to fly at their victims.

It was a dramatic struggle waged by the conqueror and wielder of the world-empire against the almost nameless thousands he would bend or destroy. Yet Diocletian's cause was hopeless. He could not extirpate a goodly fraction of all his subjects. Many of his governors, under a show of loyal zeal, were actually humane, accepting any formality for a "sacrifice to the gods," and even causing the incense to be thrust into the unwilling defendant's hand. Constantius Chlorus enforced the decrees as little as possible in the West, though Maximianus was savage in Italy. But Diocletian did not wait for the end of his vain effort. He had probably resolved to see in his own lifetime whether his quadruple system — the two Augusti and the two Cæsars — would work effectively with the master hand with-

drawn. No doubt also he was weary of the cares of empire, and old age was upon him. Two new Cæsars were created: **Severus**, who was to rule Italy and Africa; **Maximinus Daza**, who was to have the Eastern Provinces. Constantius Chlorus and Galerius were promoted to the titles of Augusti. On May 1, 305 A.D., Diocletian abdicated the Empire in the presence of his army on the plain by Nicomedia, and retired to the magnificent palace he had built at Salóna in Dalmatia. Maximianus he had persuaded to abdicate likewise, though with great reluctance. The world had new masters.

The abdication of Dicoletian stands all but unique in history.<sup>1</sup> He retired in the plenitude of his power. Unfortunately for himself he was to live long enough to see his establishment of the imperial succession vanish in the tumult of civil war, and to see Christianity become a tolerated and triumphant religion. He died in 313 at Salona. Despite the failure of many of his policies, he was an example of how, even in its decay, the Roman system could produce able men.

6. **The Coming of Constantine (reign 306-337 A.D.); the Triumph of Christianity.** — Theoretically, on the retirement of Diocletian, Constantius Chlorus had been left on terms of equality with the

<sup>1</sup> The famous parallel is the abdication of Charles V in 1556.


other Augustus, Galerius. Actually, however, the two new Cæsars were far more attached to Galerius than to his colleague, who in consequence controlled only one-fourth of the Empire. Galerius kept Constantius's son Constantine at his court as a kind of hostage for the father. Shortly after the great abdication, however, the young man made his escape to the West, and in 306, when Constantius died at York (Eboracum), in Britain, his soldiers promptly clothed Constantine with the purple. This was not to Galerius's liking, yet he agreed to accept Constantine as the junior Cæsar, the more readily because other problems were arising nearer home. Old Maximianus had retired very reluctantly; he was now grasping again at the empire; and at Rome the Prætorians (now merely the local garrison, not the imperial guard) were raising to power his worthless son **Maxentius**. It was practically the last attempt of the old Roman pride, military and civic, to claim its share in the distribution of power, outraged as it had been by the desertion of the emperors for the provinces. For the moment it was successful. Severus perished at Ravenna after an unsuccessful campaign against Maxentius, who now, along with his father, assumed the title of Augustus. Constantine did the like; Galerius created a new Augustus in the West, — **Licinius**, — so there

were at least *six Augusti*, all claiming the supreme positions of the Empire. Vainly Galerius strove to destroy Maxentius and Maximianus. His attack on Italy was defeated, and he was plunged in even greater difficulties. In 311 A.D., worn out by storm and stress, he died. He had already been driven to recognize the hopelessness of persecuting the Christians. His violent edicts simply could not be enforced. In 311 A.D., shortly before his end, he issued an edict of toleration, in which he deplored the unwillingness of the Christians "to come back to reason," yet out of his "most prompt indulgence" he allowed them to "hold their conventicles, provided they did nothing contrary to good order."

This was not quite the end of the persecution. Daza and Licinius were still to oppress cruelly in the East, but the great battle of a brotherhood of the weak against a mighty despotism had been substantially won.

Ere Galerius had died, the aged Maximianus had quarrelled with his son Maxentius, had fled to the court of Constantine, and there speedily was put to death by that vigorous but unscrupulous ruler. In 312 A.D. Constantine moved against Maxentius, who had disgusted Italy by his cruelty and incompetence, although the Prætorians, duly humored, still stood by him. It was high time to end the incessant

strife following the collapse of Diocletian's system. With the warlike army of the West at his back, Constantine, young, keen-eyed, undaunted, forced the Alpine passes, routed Maxentius's generals in Northern Italy and drew near to Rome, where Maxentius had concentrated a large force for a final stand.

What followed next? It is easy to criticise the story as subsequently given out, to explain that it was fabricated after in the reign of Constantine by Christian biographers. Yet the story is a famous one, and some facts are indisputable. The tale runs that shortly before the decisive battle Constantine, having prayed earnestly for divine help, fell asleep; he dreamed that Christ appeared to him, indicating to him to inscribe the Cross upon his banners (*hoc signo vinces*!), and bear it against his foes with full confidence of victory. The next morning he caused the Cross to be blazoned on a standard called the *Labarum*, in a form to make also a monogram of the name of Christ in Greek (). Inspired by this promise and symbol, he and his army swept forward, and at the **Mulvian Bridge** (27th October, 312 A.D.), nigh to Rome, Maxentius's host was completely routed. The pagan Emperor was drowned in the Tiber; Constantine entered Rome, his legions very probably bearing through the applauding Forum the standard of the once despised Cross.

Probably — assuming Constantine did now for the first time use the cross on his banners — he had long been in sympathy with Christianity, and had — with wise political instinct — resolved to utilize the strength of the growing Church to consolidate his empire. In 313 A.D., in alliance with Licinius, the master of the East (who had just defeated and destroyed Maximinus Daza), — he issued the famous *Edict of Milan*, by which Christianity was not merely permitted to all his subjects, but was put practically on an equality with paganism, by exempting churches as well as temples from direct taxation. The martyrs had not died in vain.

**7. The Reign of Constantine; the Founding of Constantinople.** — The battle of the Mulvian Bridge had been decisive. The West was now in the hands of another daring innovator. Admirable his character was not; he was destined to put to death his eldest son, Crispus, his wife, Faustina, and cruelly to do away with many enemies. Though potently favoring the Christians, he never formally repudiated paganism until on his death-bed. He was still “Pontifex Maximus,” nominally the chief priest of the old state religion.<sup>1</sup> In 314 A.D. he became em-

<sup>1</sup> This fact did not prevent the Christian clergy from treating his utterances as semi-inspired. On occasions he seems to have preached regular sermons in the palace chapel. Undoubtedly



broiled with Licinius, and after a brief war took away his power in the major part of the Balkan Peninsula. The struggle, however, was not final. The two emperors affected to be colleagues until 323 A.D., when Licinius — probably alarmed at the favor Constantine was winning among the Eastern Christians — took up arms again. But once more the army of the West proved superior to its Eastern rival. Licinius lost a great battle at Adrianople, his fleet was defeated in the Hellespont, his stronghold at Byzantium was hard pressed, and at last he was utterly routed at Chrysopolis (in Asia, opposite Byzantium). Fleeing to Nicomedia, he was taken prisoner, and soon after (324 A.D.) put to death. From this time until 337 A.D. the Empire again had a single master, both for woe and for weal.

Two great events marked the reign of Constantine: the Council of Nicæa, and the founding of Constantinople. It is a gloomy commentary upon the way in which the Christians had learned the lesson of holy charity, that hardly had persecution ceased ere violent doctrinal dissensions broke out among them. The fiercest of these, a veritable tempest in the Church, was the *Arian Controversy*. Arius, an eloquent and popular "presbyter" of Alexandria, his sympathies were with the Christians, but it was hardly safe to repudiate the old religion too absolutely.

became, even ere Constantine was sole sovran, the exponent of a highly formidable heresy. Contrary to the previous general run of theological opinion, he taught that the "Son" (Jesus Christ) although invested with divine power by God the Father, was simply the first created of all beings, although fashioned out of nothing and perfect in excellence. Practically, this was a denial of the Godhead of Jesus as the actual eternal Son of the Father. The theological value of this opinion there is no need for historians to consider, yet it is worth noticing that if Arianism had prevailed, early Christianity would have been at a great *temporal* disadvantage. In combating the paganism of the barbarians who were presently to destroy the Empire, it was a vast gain for the Church to claim as its earthly founder the "Very God," not a "God-Man," a personage simply better than Socrates. If once the feeble critical faculties of the age were satisfied that the high claims of the Church for its Master were valid, the Church could assume a sanction and authority impossible to any cold, man-made monotheism. It was thus no mere theological quibble about which Arius and his foes strove. Sides were taken throughout the Eastern Church; fiery excommunications were bandied about. Dismayed at this strife in the organization he had fostered, Constantine sum-

moned at Nicæa in Bithynia a great council of the leaders of the entire Church (325 A.D.).

The **Council of Nicæa**, attended by 318 bishops and a host of lesser ecclesiastics, is a mile-stone in Christian history. (a) It marks the intermingling of Church and State, such as prevailed all through the Middle Ages. Constantine himself — not yet even a communicant of the Church — took part in the deliberations. (b) It put an abiding seal and stamp upon Christian doctrine. Thanks especially to the eloquence of *Athanasius*, another churchman of Alexandria, the Council condemned Arius, and adopted the famous *Nicene Creed*, in which the Godhead of Jesus Christ was affirmed in the clearest possible language. A great deal of other ecclesiastical business was transacted, the date for Easter was fixed, and a series of canons (Church laws) on questions of Church policy and discipline enacted. In short, from this time onwards a "General Council" came to be recognized as an ultimate appellate and reforming power in the Church.

The Council of Nicæa did not end Arianism. The heretics refused to submit; thanks to personal influences at court, they induced even Constantine to show them favor. The strife went on bitterly during the reigns of later emperors, and divers of the barbarian tribes that were to invade the Empire were

converted first to Arianism, and only later to "Catholic Christianity." But the great bulk of the Church accepted the decisions of the Council, and the Nicene Creed is recited in countless churches at the present day.

The other great deed of Constantine was the **founding of Constantinople**. Hard experience had taught that it was impossible to govern the Empire from Rome; it was too far from the northern frontiers; too far from the very important East. Rome, too, was steeped in pagan tradition. Christianity needed a capital specifically its own. In his war with Licinius, Constantine had learned of the matchless advantages of old *Byzantium* — in Europe yet fronting Asia: with easy access to the Danube, with a magnificent harbor, and superb possibilities of defence. It was here he began the building of a "New Rome." The resources of the administration and treasury were strained to hasten the work. Magnificent palaces, baths, circuses, forums, and the like were undertaken. Senators from Old Rome on the Tiber were induced to move to the new capital. Settlers from the adjacent provinces were forced or induced to swell the populace. Old Rome and many other ancient cities were stripped of their works of art to beautify the "City of Constantine" — Constantinople, as almost from the first it was called.

In 330 A.D. the city was solemnly dedicated, — Christian writers say to the Blessed Virgin, — and from this time it was the usual seat of the imperial court. Thus the old capital, long deserted by the emperors, could no longer claim to be even the largest city in the Empire. A second “Senate” was set up in the new city; and in magnificence, in population (especially as she declined), Rome was entirely rivalled by Constantinople — another sign that the original Roman Empire, as its founders knew it, was surely drawing towards its end.

**8. The Later Roman Régime.** — The reign of Constantine was one of relative peace and prosperity; yet the Emperor was unable or unwilling to hold back the destructive influences silently at work. The Goths, Franks, and Persians were indeed kept in check, but some of Constantine’s legislation actually made a bad situation worse. To carry out his ambitious schemes at Constantinople and elsewhere the Emperor taxed unmercifully. The old oppression by the treasury became harder than ever. There were special taxes on senators, special taxes on industries, numbing to all trade. By this time the positions of municipal senators (decurions), once honorable, had become to every holder a curse, for such holders were liable for the full arrears of taxes in their community, whether owed by them or not.

Stern laws, frequently reënforced, tended to fix every man in a *status* — a position heritable from father to son — which bound him to his paternal craft, or calling, or farm, — almost the whole object being to prevent the evasion of taxes or public service. The Christian clergy, soldiers, and divers very high officials were exempt from the load of taxation. It was crushing upon all the rest; and decurions actually tried to escape their “nobility” and flee away, rather than endure the financial burdens which meant beggary.

In the agricultural communities the process of reducing the small farmers to quasi-serfs (*coloni*) was still going on. Only the great landed proprietors, able to pay the tax and bribe the officials, were waxing mightier than ever. In 332 A.D. the Emperor ordained that once a *colonus* meant always a *colonus* — the former bare *legal* right to quit the proprietor's estate was taken away; really, however, the recognition of an actual condition of servitude.

Among the new offices and institutions we find in this age it is hard to decide just which originated with Constantine, which with Diocletian, which with earlier emperors. By the end of the reign of Constantine we meet a hierarchy of great officers, usually bearing the title of *Comes* (= Count, Companion to the Emperor) and *Dux* (= Duke, Leader of a

large division of the army). The imperial court is "Sacred" despite professions of Christianity; thus, the "Court of the Sacred Largesses" is the Finance Minister. The time-honored consuls, etc., were not yet abolished, but the civil administration was now largely in the hands of *four prætorian præfects*, no longer leaders of the guard,<sup>1</sup> who ruled four great divisions of the Empire, — the præfectures of the East, of Illyricum, of Italy, and of Gaul (with Britain and Spain). Subdividing these præfectures were altogether *thirteen dioceses*, each under a vice-præfect or *vicarius*, and these dioceses in turn were broken into *one hundred and sixteen rather small provinces*, ruled by magistrates with differing titles, — proconsuls, consulars, correctors, or more frequently, presidents (*præsides*).

Something had been done to restore the coinage from the utter disorder and worthlessness of the third century; but nothing effective was accomplished to prevent the increasing influx of barbarians into the army. The administration, through all its great horde of officials, ever tightened its grip on the unfortunate subject, converting him into a mere tax-paying machine, and yet denying him the use of weapons. Long since, by constant governmental

<sup>1</sup> The Prætorian Guard was abolished upon the downfall of Maxentius (312 A.D.).

interference and the wrack of war, the liberties of the cities — the most flourishing part of the Empire — had been ruined. Liberty in the political sense existed nowhere; and art and literature had very nearly withered away. Constantinople rose as a magnificent city, but her creation was almost the last great effort of a civilization far past its prime.

In 337 A.D. Constantine "the Great" (so his Christian eulogists called him) died. He had been cruel to his kinsfolk, and unsparing towards his subjects; but perhaps it would be unfair to upbraid him with failing to foresee all the consequences of an absolutism he did not create. The man who could recognize the temporal value of Christianity, and who could found Constantinople — on the most strategic site in the world — had certain elements of greatness about him, despite much human unworthiness.

**9. The Last Emperors before the Invasions (337-378 A.D.).** — The generation between the death of Constantine and the permanent lodgment of the barbarians inside the Empire was relatively quiet so far as frontier invasions were concerned. Constantine had unwisely divided the sovereignty between his three surviving sons and two nephews, but by 340 A.D. the nephews and one of the sons, Constantine II, had perished in fratricidal strife. In 350 A.D. Constans, the ruler of the West, died, and Constan-



**tius** (sole ruler, 350-361) proved fairly vigorous and competent in dealing with the uneasy Franks and Alemanni.

In 361 A.D. the army in Gaul mutinied and raised to the purple **Julian the Philosopher** (or "the Apostate") (361-363 A.D.). Julian was a cousin of Constantius, and had already been created a Cæsar. The Emperor marched against him, but died ere the decisive battle. Julian was now generally recognized. He had been brought up amid Christian influences, but he was disgusted at the contentions of unworthy churchmen, and was profoundly tinctured with the later types of pagan mysticism and philosophy. *Julian was the last pagan Augustus.* Himself a keen writer, he waged war in favor of paganism with his pen, and strove by official discouragement of Christianity — though he stopped short of physical persecution — and by purifying the old heathen cults to bring back the ancient worship to favor. It was a vain attempt in any case. Christianity was now far stronger than in Diocletian's day. After a short reign, however, before he could learn the futility of his attempt, Julian died on an expedition against the Persians.

The army chose as successor **Jovianus** (363-364 A.D.), who was a Christian, and after his sudden death **Valentinianus** (364-375 A.D.), a not incapable

soldier, who assumed the rule of the West, but gave the East to his less competent brother, **Valens** (364-378). On Valentinianus's death he was succeeded in the West by his son, **Gratianus** (375-383 A.D.), but Valens continued to reign in the East. Despite various frontier tumults, the Empire seemed intact when, in 375 A.D., the Germanic Goths north of the Danube, fleeing before the savage Huns, who were invading Europe from Asia, appeared on the confines of Valens's dominions, and begged refuge in the Empire as peaceful settlers. After much parleying, the Goths were admitted, but disputes with Roman officials as to the lands they were to receive led to war, and their ravaging horde passed over the Balkan Peninsula. At *Adrianople* (378 A.D.) Valens, with a strong imperial army, was destroyed by them. The barbarians were now fairly within the Empire, and were never to be driven out. The Roman Age had ended; the Middle Ages had begun.

10. **Retrospect.** — In 378 A.D. the Roman Empire was on the point of a lingering but certain death. Egyptian, Judean, Syrian, Hellene, Italian, Celt — all had been fused into one vast society, — a world-state such as never before had been, and has not since existed. Now was coming the dissolution — the long, deep agony of the early Middle Ages, the infinite pain and travail, while war reigned and

civilization slept. Christianity had been accepted too late to save the old society from its sins. Could the ultimate disaster have been averted? Perhaps, — if Augustus and his immediate successors had been men of superhuman prescience, — though by the year 200 A.D. the evils had become too great to be really healed. Many of the causes of decay have already been given,<sup>1</sup> yet looking backward from the end of the imperial society to its beginning, certain fundamental errors, inherent in the government rather than merely in society, stand out clearly, that from the outset burdened the working of the Empire.

I. No good method of succession to the Empire was arranged. Too much scope was given for the intrigues of ambitious generals and the passions of the legions. A constant premium was put on civil war.

II. The emperors ended by establishing a despotism; but there was no equality even among the subject masses. To the evils of monarchy were added the evils of aristocracy. The governmental policy consistently favored the rich — the Senatorial and Equestrian orders<sup>2</sup> — at the expense of the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 142-150.

<sup>2</sup> The *Equites* as an order disappear after Constantine. Some were levelled with the Plebs, some merged in the senatorial class.

Plebeians. Quite early in the course of the Empire we find the legal distinction between *honestiores* and *humiliores*, — the noblemen and the poor; the law becomes openly “the respecter of persons,” and there is a lighter punishment for the well born than for the humble.

III. The army was too small, considering its great task. In fear of encouraging revolt among the subjects, the military virtues and training were discouraged outside the actual camp. There was no reserve, no efficient militia. The suicidal policy of recruiting barbarians went on to the end. Finally, in the third century, the army got wholly out of hand. Diocletian and Constantine effected some temporary, but not permanent, improvements.

IV. No attempt was made to substitute free labor for slavery. The rise of the *coloni* simply introduced a serfage that was almost as hard on the peasantry as the average servitude.

V. No encouragement was given to free local institutions. The thriving municipal life was allowed to be crushed out. The provincial assemblies for “worship of the emperor” were never allowed to become really efficient representative bodies.

VI. The government did not use its vast resources for the ultimate public betterment. It built roads, baths, amphitheatres; it gave games, doled out corn,

## THE ROMAN EMPIRE

supported orphans; but there seem to have been no attempts at general sanitation, the prevention of plagues by developing science, the promotion of labor- and time-saving inventions. There was intelligence enough in the early Empire to have invented a locomotive or a spinning-jenny, had the ruling powers really felt the need of expanding the human horizon. They could not see beyond the old methods, the painful, laborious ways of their fathers. Only in the arts which directly cater to ostentation and vanity was certain progress made; *e.g.* in the famous Baths of Caracalla at Rome, a wonderful piece of architecture, — the hanging of the domes, etc., is extremely ingenious, because the ingenuity of the architect redounded to the glory of the imperial builder.

VII. Again, no system of taxation was devised that could be endured save in times of prosperity. Until about 161 A.D. probably most taxes were paid readily, because the world had peace and plenty. In the stormy days following, the taxes were not abated, though they cost the heart's blood of the provincials, racked by civil war or invasion. On the contrary, urged by military necessity, or sheer extravagance, even relatively able emperors, like Diocletian and Constantine, added to the burden. This in itself was enough to breed disaster.

The Roman Empire fell. The story of its fall — of Alaric, Gaiseric, Odoacer, Theodoric, and their successors, forms the opening chapter of mediæval history. But even in its fall, its shadow loomed across the later ages. There was its so-called revival by Charlemagne and the kings of Germany — in the “Holy Roman Empire,” which, with its strange vicissitudes, forms so great a part of the story of Italy and Germany. Also at Constantinople the “Eastern” or “Byzantine Empire” lived on, and claimed to sustain the old Roman traditions. But the Eastern Empire owed its strength and its undeniable glory to the Greek and Oriental element within it. In the West the barbarian “Kings” were to take the place of the imperial “Augusti.”



## APPENDIX A

### THE GOVERNORSHIPS OF THE PROVINCES OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

There were several kinds of governorships under the Empire, namely: —

I. Senatorial Governors, chosen by the Senate for one year to rule the senatorial provinces.

(a) *Consular Proconsuls*, for the two most important senatorial provinces — Asia and Africa.

(b) *Prætorian Proconsuls*, for the less important senatorial provinces.

II. Imperial Governors. The emperor in theory governed the imperial provinces himself, and simply sent a deputy (*legatus*) to rule on the spot for him. These *legati Augusti pro-prætores* — to give the full title — held office at pleasure of their master, sometimes for many years. They were: —

(a) *Consular Legati*, for the more important imperial commands and provinces.

(b) *Prætorian Legati*, for the less important imperial commands and provinces.

(c) *Imperial Procurators*. A procurator under the Empire was ordinarily an agent of the



emperor to attend to the management of his personal estates, or to collect the revenues of the imperial provinces for the *fiscus* (emperor's treasury). But for various small provinces there were *procuratores Cæsaris pro legato* — an inferior class of *legati*, where a prætorian or consular legatus was not needed, e.g. Pontius Pilate in Judæa in 33 A.D. was a governor of this rank of procurator. These men were more or less subject to the regular legatus of some neighboring province, — thus Pilate was presently removed from office by the consular legatus of Syria.

- (d) *In Egypt*, regarded as the emperor's private domain-land, was a *special governor*, a *præfectus*, of merely equestrian rank, but clothed with the power of a consular legatus.

A list of the provinces as they had developed by reign of Trajan, with the rank of the governor of each, follows:<sup>1</sup> —

[Imperial provinces in *italics*: all others are senatorial.]

*Britain*: consular legatus.

*Belgica* (North Gaul): prætorian leg.

*Lugdunensis* (Central Gaul): prætorian leg.

<sup>1</sup> To ascertain the precise status of certain provinces at a given time is a matter of difficulty.

- Aquitania* (Southwest Gaul): prætorian leg.  
*Narbonensis* (Southeast Gaul): prætorian proconsul.  
*Upper Germany*: consular leg.  
*Lower Germany*: consular leg.  
*Tarraconensis* (North Spain): consular leg.  
*Lusitania* (Southwest Spain): prætorian leg.  
*Bætica* (South Spain): prætorian proconsul.  
*Mauretania* (divided into two sections): procuratores.  
*Numidia*: prætorian leg.  
*Africa*: consular proconsul.  
*Sardinia and Corsica*: procurator (?).  
*Sicily*: prætorian proconsul.  
*Upper and Lower Pannonia*: each under a consular leg.  
*Upper and Lower Mæsia*: each under a consular leg.  
*Dacia*: consular leg.  
*Alpine Provinces* (divided into three sections): procuratores.  
*Rhætia*: procurator.  
*Noricum*: procurator.  
*Thrace*: prætorian leg.  
*Epirus*: procurator (?).  
*Macedonia*: prætorian proconsul.  
*Achaia* (Greece Proper): prætorian proconsul.  
*Crete and Cyrene*: prætorian proconsul.  
*Bithynia*: prætorian proconsul.  
*Cyprus*: prætorian proconsul.  
*Asia*: consular proconsul.  
*Galatia*: prætorian leg.  
*Pamphylia and Lycia*: prætorian leg.

*Cappadocia*: consular leg.

*Cilicia*: prætorian leg.

*Syria*: consular leg.

*Arabia*: prætorian leg.

*Judæa*, up to fall of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.: a procurator;  
later, a special consular leg.

*Egypt*: *præfectus*, of equestrian rank, but with powers of  
consular leg.

Note how the Senate has peaceful provinces where usually no army is needed by the governor, while all the exposed frontier, or turbulent provinces, are the emperor's.

## APPENDIX B

### CHIEF OFFICIALS AND MAGISTRATES AT ROME UNDER THE EARLY EMPIRE

#### A. Direct Appointees and Agents of the Emperor.

1. *Prætorian Præfect*. Commander of Imperial Guard. Highly important officer and practically prime minister; had general care of execution of imperial decrees. Under later Empire acted as high judge on appeals in litigation originating in the provinces. This office often divided among two men.
2. *City Præfect (Præfectus Urbi)*. Practically governor of city of Rome. Commanded the "Urban Cohorts" — city patrol (about 6000 men). Acquired presently chief appellate jurisdiction in Rome and region about.
3. *Præfect of the Watch (Præfectus Vigilum)*. Commanded the *Vigiles* (7000 or more), body of police and firemen supplementing the "Urban Cohorts"; he was subordinate to the city præfect.
4. *Præfect of the Corn Supply (Præfectus Annonæ)*. Head of the special imperial bureau

for keeping Rome supplied with Egyptian and African corn.

5. *Curators of the Water Supply* (three on the board).
6. *Curators of the Roads* (one official for each of the great roads in Italy).
7. *Procurators of the Private Estates of the Emperor* (a large number at Rome and in the provinces).
8. *Procurator of the Fiscus* (*Procurator a rationibus*), down to Hadrian's time a freedman, after him an Eques; was superintendent of the imperial treasury.
9. *Secretaries for the Imperial Correspondence* (*ab epistolis*), one for correspondence in Greek, one for Latin.
9. *Secretary for Petitions to the Emperor* (*a libellis*).
10. *Secretaries for preparing Legal Opinions for the Emperor* (*a cognitionibus*).

[N. B. Down to Hadrian's time practically all these important secretaryships were held by freedmen.]

## B. Old Republican Magistracies.

[Elected annually after the death of Augustus, by votes of the Senate.]

1. *Consuls* (two). Presided over Senate; had certain judicial functions, but office mainly ornamental. Great honor to hold it. Under

Empire, the first pair of consuls for the year often gave way after a few months to substitute consuls (*consules suffecti*).

2. *Prætors* (under Augustus twelve, later raised to eighteen). Acted as presidents of courts, but power as judicial officers greatly abridged by the city præfect, prætorian præfect, and other imperial officers.
3. *Aediles* (six). Commissioners of Public Works, Superintendents of Markets, etc., under old Republic. Now shorn of most of their powers, save as street and sanitary commissioners, by new imperial officers.
4. *Tribunes of the Plebs* (ten). Theoretically still had great prerogatives, especially right to veto acts of Senate and magistrates. Power soon reduced to a show. "An empty shadow and a name without honor" (a view current about 100 A.D.).
5. *Quæstors* (probably twenty). During part of imperial period had charge of *Ærarium* (Senate's treasury). Acted as secretaries and financial aids for the consuls, the governors of the senatorial provinces, and two quæstors, specially honored, were assigned as a kind of secretaries to the emperor.

## APPENDIX C

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EMPERORS' AND OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

- 44 B.C. Assassination of Julius Cæsar.**  
Antonius and Octavian grasping for power.
- 43 Battle of Mutina.** Antonius, Octavian, and Lepidus form Second Triumvirate.
- 42 Battle of Philippi, avenging of Cæsar.**
- 38-36 War with Sextus Pompeius for Sicily.**
- 36 Fall of Sextus Pompeius; Lepidus expelled from government.**
- 31 Battle of Actium.** Fall of Antonius and Cleopatra.
- 31 B.C.-14 A.D. Rule of Augustus** (Octavian took name in 27 B.C.) as "Princeps" and actual Monarch. An age of firm government, many reforms, material prosperity, literary activity.
- 12-9 B.C. Drusus makes temporary conquest of Germany.**

- 9 A.D. Successful revolt of Germany.
- 14-37 Rule of Tiberius, stepson of Augustus (capable ruler, but morose, unpopular; at end, cruel).
- 19 Death of Germanicus in Syria after his uncompleted attempt to win back Germany.
- 31 Fall of Sejanus, the great prime minister of Tiberius. Tiberius ends reign self-exiled at Capri.
- 37-41 Caligula, son of Germanicus (destructive madman).
- 41-54 Claudius, younger brother of Germanicus (fairly able sovereign, but ruled by his freedmen — Narcissus, Pallas, etc. — and his profligate wives, Messalina and Agrippina the Younger).
- 43 Romans begin conquest of Britain.
- 54-68 Nero, son of Agrippina and adopted son of Claudius (ill-balanced youth with taste for the arts, poetry, music, etc., — under bad influences becomes a monster: murders mother, wife, kinsfolk; but for first five years Empire well ruled by his tutor, Seneca, and prætorian præfect, Burrhus).



- 64 Great Fire in Rome. Persecution of the Christians.
- |              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| 68-69 Galba  | } | Three short-reigning, incapable emperors following on deposition and suicide of Nero. Violent civil wars, each army supporting its candidate to the purple. |
| 69 Otho      |   |   |
| 69 Vitellius |   |   |
- 69-79 **Vespasian**, of humble origin, founder of "Flavian Dynasty." Efficient general, and common-sense reformer and restorer of Empire after misrule of Nero's later years and the civil war.
- 69-71 Civilis's revolt among the Batavians and Gauls. At first successful, then wholly suppressed.
- 70 Titus captures and destroys Jerusalem (Jews in revolt since 66 A.D.).
- 79-81 **Titus**, eldest son of Vespasian. (Popular, generous, good soldier.)
- 79 Eruption of Vesuvius: Pompeii buried.
- 81-96 **Domitian**, younger son of Vespasian. (Not without capacity, but a man of the Tiberius type. Encouraged informers. Lowered prestige of Senate. Took censorship for life. Finally driven to acts of cruelty.)

- 96-98 Nerva**, aged senator raised to power on murder of Domitian (moderate, peace-loving man).
- 98-117 Trajan**, adopted son of Nerva. (Best general in army; reformer and conqueror; respected Senate; humane and moderate in policy; his reign among the very best.)
- 101-102, 105-107** Campaigns against Dacians, formidable people north of Danube; they are conquered, and Dacia made a province.
- 114-116** Trajan invades Parthia. Transitory conquest of whole Tigro-Euphrates Valley.
- 117-138 Hadrian**, adopted son of Trajan (art-lover and æsthete; more a Hellene than Roman; reorganized army, but preserved peace; spent much of reign on travels around whole Empire; somewhat erratic in temperament, but intelligent and beneficent law-giver; reorganization of imperial council: publication of the "Perpetual Edict"; beginning of codification of Roman law).

**138-161 Antoninus Pius**, adopted son of Hadrian (peaceful, very uneventful reign, but probably an unperceived deterioration of the Empire).

**161-180 Marcus Aurelius**, adopted son of Antoninus (humanitarian and philosopher; but period of pestilence, insurrection, Germanic invasions — Quadi, Marcomanni, etc. — from North. *The Empire, hitherto seemingly very prosperous, begins to decline.*)

**180-192 Commodus**, son of Marcus (unworthy tyrant, of the type of a Nero).

**193 Pertinax** (able ruler, but soon murdered by mutinous prætorians).

**193 Didius Julianus** (bought the Empire from prætorians; wholly unworthy, soon perished).

**193-211 Septimius Severus**, leader of Danubian legions (overcame other claimants to purple. Very capable ruler, but stern, often cruel. Ignored opinion of Senate; beginning of unveiled despotism).

**211-217 Caracalla**, son of Septimius Severus (tyrant and fratricide. Bestowed "citizenship" on provincials in order to tax them more. Humored

the army, which was becoming demoralized).

**217 Macrinus**, short-lived usurper.

**218-222 Elagabalus**, a Syrian priest of the sun-god. (Profligate youth, who, however, was largely controlled by his able mother and grandmother.)

**222-235 Alexander Severus**, cousin of Elagabalus (agreeable personality; largely controlled by his mother and great jurist Ulpianus; period of comparative calm and prosperity; Senate treated with respect; but inglorious wars with revived Persian Empire, and army getting out of control).

**235-238 Maximinus** Period of terrible confusion. Con-

**238 Gordianus I**      stant revolts of legions, pre-  
with **Gordianus II**      tenders, usurpers, etc. Also

**238-244 Gordianus III**      invasions by Germanic tribes

**244-249 Philip the**      and Persians. Decius slain in  
                         **Arabian**      battle by Goths. Valerianus

**249-251 Decius**      taken captive by Persians.

**251-253 Gallus**      Empire seemed on verge of

**253 Æmilianus**      destruction. Saved by able

**253-260 Valerianus**      military emperors following.

**260-268 Gallienus** ]

**268-270 Claudius II**, flung back invading Goths and Alemanni.

- 270-275 Aurelian**, evacuated Dacia, but drove back Goths and other invaders. (Built walls around city of Rome. Conquered Zenobia, "Queen of the East," with power centered at Palmyra, and Tetricius, Emperor of seceding "Gallic Empire." A remarkable reign.)
- 275 Tacitus**, aged senator, named by Senate at request of army after murder of Aurelian.
- 276-282 Probus** (worthy successor of Aurelian's policy. Beat back invaders; suppressed rebels).
- 282-283 Carus** (died on successful invasion of Persia).
- 284 Numerianus**, son of Carus (soon died).
- 284-305 Diocletian**; Illyrian peasant. Elevated to power by army as best available man. (Bold innovator; tried to end anarchy, and danger of revolt by *division of Empire*. Provinces subdivided to discourage governors from revolt. Last pretence of Republican liberties abolished. Senate merely city council of Rome; new and severe taxes; Oriental

court ceremonial introduced.  
*Absolute monarchy* from this  
reign onward.)

**285 Maximianus** made Augustus (co-emperor).

**293 Constantius Chlorus and Galerius**, made "Cæsars"  
(junior emperors).

**303** Last great persecution of Christians.

**305** Diocletian abdicates, wishing to  
see how his system would work  
in his lifetime. New Cæsars  
appointed, former Cæsars being  
raised to Augusti.

**306-312** Almost ceaseless civil war and  
change of rulers.

**306-337 Constantine the Great**, son of Constantius  
Chlorus. (At first holds only  
extreme Western Provinces.)

**312** Battle of Mulvian Bridge. Con-  
stantine wins Rome and Italy.  
Becomes a protector of Chris-  
tians.

**323** Constantine destroys Licinius, ruler  
of the East, and is sole emperor.

**325** Council of Nicæa (first Christian  
General Council) called by Con-  
stantine to deal with Arian  
heresy.

**330** Constantine founds a "New

Rome," at Byzantium (*Constantinople*), — an essentially Christian city.

Diocletian's policy of absolutism, and reorganization of taxes, provinces, and army continued.

337-361 The sons and kinsfolk of Constantine, many civil wars, etc. but chief ruler is —

337-361 **Constantius**, son of Constantine.

361-363 **Julian**, cousin of Constantius (pagan reactionary, with literary and philosophical bent; tried to discourage Christianity — "The Apostate" — and revive paganism).

363-364 **Jovianus**, a Christian.

364-375 **Valentinianus I** in the West, — a Christian.

364-378 **Valens** (brother of last) in the East.

367-383 **Gratianus**, son of Valentinianus I, succeeds in the West.

378 *The Visigoths*, — entering Empire to escape the Huns, — *slay Valens at Battle of Adrianople*. Beginning of the Fall of the Roman Empire.

# INDEX

## A

- Actium, battle of, 23.  
 Adrianople, battle of, 197.  
 Æmilianus, 153.  
 Ærarium, Senate's treasury, 45.  
 Agrippa, 19, 22, 61.  
 Agrippina the Younger, 81, 82, 86.  
 Albinus, 132, 134.  
 Alexander Severus, reign of, 139, 141.  
 Antoninus Pius, reign of, 121, 122.  
 Antonius (Marcus), consul when Cæsar was slain, 9; seizes government, 10; attacks Decimus Brutus, 13; forms Triumvirate with Octavian and Lepidus, 15; wins battle of Philippi, 16; meets Cleopatra, 19; falls from power, 20-23; commits suicide, 24.  
 Apollonius of Tyana, 166.  
 Arian controversy, 188.  
 Arminius, 57.  
 Army, organization under early Empire, 41; becomes filled with Barbarians, 148; reorganized by Diocletian, 178.  
 Augustus, name taken by Octavian, 27; régime he establishes, 28-37; proverbial for leniency, 31; revives religion, 45; attempts to found a dynasty, 59; dies, 63.  
 Aurelian, his personality, 155; crushes Goths, 156; crushes Alemanni, 157; overcomes Zenobia, 158; overcomes Tetricius, 159; is murdered, 160.

## B

- Britain, its conquest begun under Claudius, 78; wall built there by Hadrian, 114.  
 Britannicus, 82, 83, 84.  
 Brutus, Decimus, 6, 11, 13, 15.  
 Brutus, Marcus, 6, 9, 11, 16.

## C

- Cæsar, name of the Emperors, 31.  
 Cæsar (Julius), conquers Gaul, 3; overthrows the Republic, 5-6; is murdered, 7; effects reforms, 7-8.  
 Caligula, see Gaius.  
 Caracalla, his reign, 137.  
 Carinus, 162.  
 Carus, 161.  
 Cassius, 6, 11, 16.  
 Christians, persecuted by Nero, 87; why subject to persecution, 168-170; their condition in third century, 171; persecuted by Decius, 173; persecuted by Valerianus, 173; tolerated by Gallienus, 173; persecuted by Diocletian, 180; tolerated by Constantine, 186; divided by heresies, 189; vainly attacked by Julian, 196.  
 Cicero, 11, 12, 16.  
 Cities of the Empire, 50, 116.  
 City life and government in time of Hadrian, 117-120.  
 Civilis, 92.  
 Civilization, decline in, 149.



Claudius, becomes Emperor, 76;  
his character, 77; ruled by his  
wives and freedmen, 79; is  
murdered, 82.  
Claudius II, 155.  
Cleopatra, 19, 21, 24.  
Coinage, debasement of, 147.  
Coloni, 143, 193.  
Colosseum, 92 note.  
Commerce of Empire, 50.  
Commodus, his reign, 130.  
Constantine (the Great), gains  
power, 184; favors Christians,  
186; holds Council of Nicæa,  
190; founds Constantinople, 191.  
Constantinople, founding of, 191.  
Constantius (son of Constantine),  
195.  
Constantius Chlorus, 176, 184.  
Council of Emperor, 113.  
Cremona, battle of, 89.  
Cyprian, 173.

D

Dacia, 99, 106, 108.  
Daza (Maximinus), 183, 187.  
Decius, becomes Emperor, 151;  
is slain by Goths, 152; perse-  
cutes Christians, 173.  
Decline of Empire, causes thereof,  
142.  
Depopulation of Empire, 145.  
Didius Julianus, 132.  
Diocletian, becomes Emperor,  
162; divides Empire, 175;  
restores prosperity, 177; re-  
organizes the army, 178; es-  
tablishes absolutism, 179;  
issues "Edict of Prices," 179;  
persecutes Christians, 180; ab-  
dicates, 183.  
Divorce, legislation against, 47.  
Domitian, becomes Emperor, 97;  
absolute rule of, 98; is mur-  
dered, 102.  
Drusus, conquers Germany, 55.

## E

Edict of Caracalla, 137.  
Edict of Prices by Diocletian, 179.  
Elagabalus, 138.  
Emperor, worship of, 47; deifi-  
cation of, 48.  
Equites (Knights), 34.

## F

Financial system under Early  
Empire, 45.  
Fiscus, 45.  
Five Good Emperors, character  
of their times, 103.  
Freedmen, 41.

## G

Gaius, reign of, 74-75.  
Gaius Cæsar, 61, 62.  
Galba, reign of, 89.  
Galerius, 176.  
Gallienus, reign of, 153, 154, 173.  
Gallus, 153.  
Germanicus, 67, 69.  
Germany, won and lost by Ro-  
mans, 53-59; attempt of Ger-  
manicus to reconquer it, 68.  
Geta, 137.  
Gordianus I, II, and III, 151.  
Goths, invade Empire in third  
century, 152; invade Empire  
in fourth century, 197.  
Gratianus, 197.

## H

Hadrian, his personality, 110;  
his works of peace, 111; evacu-  
ates Parthian provinces, 112;  
puts in force the "Perpetual  
Edict," 112; organizes Privy  
Council, 113; puts Italy under  
Imperial jurisdiction, 113; leg-  
islates in favor of slaves, 113;  
visits all parts of the Empire,  
115.

I

Imperator (Emperor), title of Roman sovereigns, 28-29.  
Italy, put under imperial judges, 113.

J

Jerusalem, taken by Titus, 96.  
Jews, revolt of, 92, 94-96.  
Jovianus, 196.  
Julia, 60, 61, 62.  
Julia Domna, 135.  
Julia Mamaea, 139.  
Julian the Philosopher (or "the Apostate"), 196.

K

Knights, see Equites.

L

Later Roman Régime, 192.  
Lepidus, 9, 15, 19.  
Licinius, 184, 187, 188.  
Literature (Latin), 52, 104.  
Livia, 60.  
Lucius Cæsar, 61, 62.  
Ludi Sæculares, 46.

M

Macrinus, 138.  
Mæcenæ, 27.  
Marcellus, 60, 61.  
Marcomanni, 127.  
Marcus Aurelius, his personality, 122; his philosophy, 123; misfortunes of his reign, 125-126; Parthian war, 126; great pestilence in his reign, 126; wars with Germanic tribes, 127; revolt of Avidius Cassius against him, 127; his last years and death, 128.  
Maxentius, 184, 186.  
Maximianus, 176, 183, 184.

Maximinus, 142, 151.  
Maximinus Daza, 183, 187.  
Messalina, 80.  
Metaurus, battle of, 157.  
Mithras, religion of, 163.  
Mulvian Bridge, battle of, 186.

N

Neo-Platonism, 166.  
Nero, adopted by Claudius, 82; declared Emperor, 82; is a good ruler under tutors, 83-84; becomes a tyrant, 84; persecutes Christians, 87; overthrown by rebels, 88.  
Nerva, reign of, 102.  
Nicæa, Council of, 190.  
Numerianus, 161.

O

Octavia (sister of Octavian), 19.  
Octavian, appears at Rome, 12; raises army, 13; joins alliance with Antonius and Lepidus, 15; assumes rule of the West and of Italy, 18; overthrows Antonius, 21-24; takes title of Augustus, 24.  
Odenathus, 153.  
Otho, reign of, 89.

P

Palmyra, 153, 156, 157, 158.  
Parthia, 20, 109, 126.  
Pax Romana, 49; bad effects of, 142.  
Perpetual Edict, 112.  
Persian kingdom, succeeds Parthia, 141.  
Pertinax, 131.  
Pescennius Niger, 132, 134.  
Philippi, battle of, 16.  
Philip the Arabian, 151.  
Plague ravages the Empire, 126.  
Plebeians, rights of, 36.

Pliny the Younger in Bithynia, 105-106.  
 Pompeii, destroyed, 97.  
 Pompeius, Sextus, 18-19.  
 Pontifex Maximus, office held by Princes, 30.  
 Postumus, 153.  
 Prætorians, put Empire up for auction, 131; are punished by Severus, 133.  
 Princes, power of, 28.  
 Proconsular power of Princes, 29.  
 Provinces, division between Emperor and Senate, 33 note; government under later Empire, 194.  
 Provincials, their condition under early Empire, 37.

## R

Religious revival under Empire, 45.  
 Road system of Empire, 49.  
 Rome, successor of all preceding civilizations, 3; rebuilt by Augustus, 49; her vastness and commerce, 51; destroyed by great fire in Nero's reign, 87.

## S

Salvius Julianus, 112.  
 Sapor (King of Persia), 153.  
 Sassanidæ, 141.  
 Sejanus, 69-72.  
 Senate, power and composition of, 32-34; abased by Diocletian, 179.  
 Seneca, 83, 85, 86.  
 Septimius Severus, overthrows Didius Julianus, 133; his reign, 134; his absolutist policy, 136.  
 Serfage, 143.  
 Severus, 183.  
 Slavery, bad results of, 143.  
 Slaves, under early Empire, 39; legislation in their favor by Hadrian, 113.

## T

Tacitus, reign of, 160.  
 Taxation, under early Empire, 38; under later Empire, 192.  
 Tetricius, 159.  
 Teutoburg Forest, battle of, 57.  
 Tiberius, son of Livia, 60; retires to Rhodes, 62; made heir of Augustus, 63; becomes Emperor, 65; his relations to Germanicus, 67; deceived by Sejanus, 70-72; becomes a tyrant, 72-74; his death, 74.  
 Titus, takes Jerusalem, 96; reign of, 96-97.  
 Trajan, his able administration, 103-104; Dacian wars, 106-108; Parthian wars, 109.  
 Tribunician power of Princes, 30.  
 Triumvirate of Octavian,<sup>1</sup> Antonius, and Lepidus, 15.

## U

Ulpianus, 139.

## V

Valens, 197.  
 Valentinianus, 196.  
 Valerianus, 153, 173.  
 Varus, 56-58.  
 Verus (Lucius), adopted by Hadrian, 116.  
 Verus the Younger, colleague of Marcus Aurelius, 124-125.  
 Vespasian, becomes Emperor, 90; his able reforms, 91; his death, 96.  
 Vitellius, becomes Emperor, 89-90.

## W

Wars, waste caused by them, 146.

## Z

Zenobia, 157, 158.

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